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JOHN RUTHERFURD, Esq;

OF EDGERSTON.

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JOHN RUTHERFURD, Esq;

OF EDGERSTON.

S E R M O N S,

BY

THE LATE REVEREND

J O H N M A I N,

D. D. AND F. R. S. EDIN.

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TO THE
P U B L I C.

THE following Sermons are posthumous, and were composed by the Author for the purpose of instructing the people under his charge, and not with a view to their publication. Notwithstanding the delicacy, as well as difficulty, of publishing Sermons under such disadvantages as these, the Editors have been induced to submit them to the Public, in compliance with the earnest desire of many who thought highly of their excellence when delivered from the Pulpit; and they flatter themselves, that, upon a candid examination

amination, they will be found to have done no injury to the reputation of the Preacher, but to have afforded a transcript of his mind, which will tend to preserve the memory of his worth, as well as to promote general edification.

If the effusions of a sound and enlightened mind, which was impressed with a full belief of the doctrines of the Gospel, which felt all the ardours of a rational devotion, and could give the most glowing descriptions of the perfections of God, as displayed in the works of nature, and made manifest in the scheme of redemption; if the suggestions of a heart, which was animated by a lively sense of the importance of moral obligation, which possessed the quickest perception of what is just and amiable, and the keenest abhorrence of what is dishonourable and base, in the conduct of men: if these be calculated to please, and to improve, it is hoped,

ped, that the Reader will be gratified and improved by a perusal of the following Sermons. Particular attention has been paid to select such Discourses as appeared to be most complete. Many of them have undergone almost no alteration; and care has been taken to render all of them as correct, as fidelity to the original manuscripts would admit. Were the Editors to mention the several respectable Clergymen who, from attachment and esteem for the Author, assisted them in selecting and preparing the Sermons for the Press, the eminence of their characters for learning, judgment, and taste, would give importance to the volume, and afford a very considerable recommendation; but it is only intrinsic merit that could prompt them to approve, and it is hoped, that the intrinsic merit, which has obtained their approbation, will also procure from the Public a favourable reception.

THE Reader may expect some account of an Author, whose Posthumous Works are recommended to his perusal; but the life of a Country Clergyman, however useful and exemplary it may be, is, in general, too barren of incidents, sufficiently interesting, to furnish materials for biography. Let it therefore suffice to mention, that Dr JOHN MAIN, Author of the following Sermons, was born in Edinburgh in the year 1728, and received his education in that city. Having passed through the University with the marked approbation of all his Masters, he was licensed a Probationer by the Presbytery of Haddington. His appearances in the Pulpit soon attracted the notice of all that neighbourhood; and when the Church of Athelstaneford became vacant, by the demission of Mr JOHN HOME, he was presented to that benefice, in the year 1757, by the late Sir DAVID KINLOCH. He remained

mained in that parish, with the entire confidence of his Patron, and his Family, and with the reverence and affection of all his Parishioners, till the year 1770, when, at the request of Mr WAUCHOPE of Edmonstone, who had formerly been his pupil, he accepted of his Church of Newton, in the Presbytery of Dalkeith. The very friendly terms on which he uniformly lived with that Gentleman, and his Family, were equally creditable to him and to them; and here he had also the satisfaction to enjoy the particular attention and respect of his Parishioners. He was admitted a Member of the Royal Society of Edinburgh, soon after it was instituted: Without his solicitation, he was honoured with the degree of Doctor of Divinity, by the University of St Andrew's, about the year 1784:—And after a long and painful illness, which he bore with exemplary resignation, he died at Newton, on

on the 13th of May 1795, in the 67th year of his age, and the 38th of his ministry.

It is believed that few persons have ever maintained a character more suited to the sacred profession. An elegant classical scholar, an enlightened philosopher, a profound divine, he united so much taste in composition, with a delivery so serious, tender, and impressive, that he engaged the attention, and won the hearts, of every audience in which he appeared. His talents, natural and acquired, well entitled him to a distinguished place in the republic of letters, had he not been withheld from exertion by invincible modesty, and a temper void of ambition. The sweetness of his disposition, and the meekness of his demeanour, did not however prevent him from displaying the energy of a firm and determined mind, on all proper occasions, in support of the
sound

found principles he held in every thing sacred and civil, and in the steady exercise of piety and virtue. The soundness of his understanding, and the purity of his morals, drew to him the respect and veneration of all orders of men; while his endearing manners, and enlightened conversation, accompanied with the highest sense of honour and integrity, particularly engaged the love and affection of the young, especially those of his own order, by whom he was much resorted to, and who could learn nothing from him but what tended to complete the character of an accomplished Clergyman. In short, as he was himself of the kindest and most affectionate disposition, he had the felicity to enjoy as much of the good will and affection of mankind as ever fell to the lot of any mortal.

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S E R M O N I.

THE NATURE AND IMPORTANCE OF THE INSTRUCTIONS
OF THE GOSPEL.

LUKE viii. 8.

*And when he had said these things, he cried,
He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

THESE words immediately succeed the beautiful parable of the sower, in which our Lord represents the instructions of the gospel as producing different effects according to the different dispositions of those who heard them. After having mentioned three different classes of unprofitable hearers, he points out a fourth description of men, whom he compares to the good ground, where the seed sprang up, and bare fruit an hundred fold. It fell upon the good soil of an honest heart, which was free from every giddy, from every vicious attachment, and properly prepared to receive and en-
A courage

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I.

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I.

courage the manifestations of divine grace; which was disposed to ponder their value, to yield to their influence, and to display their energy in all the various and substantial fruits of an holy and virtuous conversation.

To excite in us the same becoming attention to the instructions of the gospel, I shall consider their general nature and intrinsic importance.

When we consider a system of religion, with a view to judge of its claim to our attention, or its authenticity and divine original, the first part of our inquiry is properly directed to its genius and spirit. It is the province of reason to examine with care its internal marks and characters; and if these shall appear corrupt and impure, or as giving any encouragement to iniquity and vice, we may venture to pronounce it not to be a religion sent from God. The reason is obvious. The great Author of our nature hath stamped upon our minds the natural sentiments of moral good and evil; the love of the one, and the abhorrence of the other; and hath informed us with impressions of our duty



duty to him. These may be called the original revelation of God to man. Whatever therefore is evidently contradictory to these pure and genuine feelings of the mind, cannot be the declaration of that God, who is eternal and immutable, and whose revelations must all be uniform and consistent. That religion alone must be received as the voice of God which is agreeable to our natural notions of the Deity, whose precepts are all favourable and friendly to virtue, which breathes the spirit of piety to God and love to man; whose evident tendency is to mortify the power of sin within the mind, to refine our passions, to confirm our peace, to establish the spiritual empire of righteousness in the heart, and to exalt humanity to the resemblance of God.

That this is the great design of Christianity, and of all its instructions, will clearly appear, if we attend to the whole scheme of it as it lies before us in the gospel. Ever rational in its nature, pure and undefiled in its laws, generous and humane in its spirit, it will be found to abound with those sacred and salutary

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II

truths, which form the human mind to solid and substantial virtue, and which lead to the enjoyment of the purest happiness of which our nature is susceptible. Amidst that great variety of instructions which our Saviour delivered to the world, we find nothing to indulge the fond and idle curiosity of men. With respect to those speculations which have no connection with life, no immediate influence on the real interests of virtue, he hath left them still unenlightened. His sole attention is directed to make men virtuous and good, and consequently wise unto salvation.

Let us pursue these thoughts a little, and consider more particularly the inestimable value and sacred importance of those instructions which we derive from the gospel.

The first important instruction which we take notice of as furnished by Christianity, is that clear and satisfying discovery which it affords of the nature and perfections of God. It is a common and a well-founded observation, that according to our notions of the divine nature, such

such will always be our religion. An error here, then, must be attended with the most dangerous effects to the character and conduct; must lay the foundation of a false religion, of an irrational and superstitious service. In this important inquiry into the nature and will of God, the light of unassisted reason can prove but a feeble and incompetent guide. The characters of wisdom and beneficence, so visible and apparent in the constitution of nature, which fill the mind with great and exalted sentiments, and with the most endearing conceptions of its author, are at the same time mixed and blended with some appearances which startle and perplex our reason, which alarm and confound its powers. To rectify our views of God, and to lay the foundation of a reasonable and manly devotion, Christianity reveals the Deity to our sight in all the glory, the majesty, the benevolence of his nature. It informs us, that he is a Being of infinite perfection, the great centre of all excellency, the inexhaustible fountain of all bliss and joy: That he at first, by one omnipotent word, reared from nothing

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I

this comely frame of nature, and with infinite art and wisdom adjusted all its intricate connexions and nice dependencies: That he continues, with an invisible hand, to sustain the order and regularity of the whole, to influence its secret springs, to actuate and move the vast machine, and is gradually carrying into execution one great scheme, concerted from eternity, while infinite power, unerring wisdom, and boundless goodness, perpetually co-operate to provide the properest means for effectuating the noblest end; that in the progress of this great work, though clouds and darkness, impenetrable by human sagacity, may surround his paths, and overcast his operations, justice and judgment and mercy are the fixed residence of his sacred throne: That this only wise God, who is wonderful in counsel and excellent in working, while he extends his attention to the most inconsiderable parts of his great dominions, maintains a most intimate connection with the human race, and is the peculiar friend and patron of the upright in heart: That he holds the interests of piety and truth

truth ever sacred and dear to him; that he delights in the prosperity and welfare of the righteous; that his providence hath adjusted every event, with a view to advance the interests of virtue, and hath rendered its path perplexed, and rugged, and uneasy, in order to educate, to form, to discipline the mind, that thus righteousness may be at last the more highly exalted, and may appear with joy unspeakable, and full of glory.

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With respect to the social and personal duties of life, what a glorious lustre and perfection do they derive from the light of Christianity! In all the precepts which were uttered by Him, who spake as never man spake, and particularly in his incomparable sermon on the mount, we are furnished with the noblest system of morality which this world ever saw. There the law of the Lord, rescued from the corruptions of designing and interested men, is delivered with that authority which rouseth the attention, and with that engaging simplicity, which addresseth itself to every understanding. The character which it aims to form is

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I.

pure, and peaceable, gentle and easy to be intreated; full of mercy and good fruits. It is fitted to expand the human heart, to warm it with benevolent regards to men, to teach its generous influences to flow unlimited and promiscuous, like the bounty of the great source of love. There sobriety, temperance, and self-government, are inculcated with a precision and accuracy, and carried to a degree of perfection, unknown to the world before. The laws of Jesus are formed with such peculiar refinement, that they reach to the secret recesses of the heart, and check every rising lust, and every latent propensity of the mind to vice. How amiable are the statutes of the Lord! They rejoice the heart. They gain the ready assent of every unbiassed understanding, and the instantaneous approbation of every virtuous mind.

To add the noblest dignity and the strongest obligation to all the pious and moral duties of life, the gospel sets before us the most amiable and unspotted standard of virtue. The characters of the best
of

of men are imperfect, and tainted with errors. But He who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, who well knew the perfections, the mind of God, hath not only declared him to men, but hath brought down true and genuine holiness from Heaven to earth, hath displayed its character and influence in his own pure and unfulfilled example, hath clothed and animated it with a living form. Here is a pattern, perfect in itself, of the most universal influence, and corresponding in every respect to the present necessities of human nature, in which virtue, godliness, temperance; patience, brotherly kindness, and charity, all shine with an illustrious splendour and dignity. He was the Lamb without spot or blemish. He knew no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth. The law of truth was in his lips. He was holy, harmless, undefiled, and separated from sinners. He was fairer than the sons of men.

Let us now turn our thoughts a little to the intrinsic excellency, and inestimable importance of those discoveries, which are in every respect peculiar to the

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I.

the instructions of the gospel. The capital discovery which first deserves our attention, is a complete deliverance from the guilt and punishment of our sins.

Should men be so far deluded as to imagine the light of nature a full and sufficient guide of life in every respect, should they erroneously hold its dictates infallible and unerring for this purpose, yet still there is one thing wanting, which manifests its imperfection, and the consequent utility, and absolute necessity of revelation. For it must be observed, that this natural light, which points out the law, promiseth indeed the favour and approbation of God, in consequence of a perfect and undeviating obedience to it, but pronounces every particular infringement a direct and irretrievable forfeiture of that inestimable blessing. Nor doth it afford to the sinner any absolute certainty of avoiding this penalty by repentance; the most punctual future obedience being no more than our duty, and consequently incapable of expiating any former offence.

It

It is true, indeed, some who bear no good will to our religion, sensible that their scheme is otherwise untenable, have made several efforts to demonstrate, from the light of unassisted reason, that the Deity is placable by repentance alone; and from observing that propensity in every good mind to be reconciled to a penitent offending brother, have concluded that there must be some corresponding benevolent propensity in the Deity, which must lead him to pity, and to receive into favour every returning sinner. But must not every man that thinks at all immediately see the weakness of such reasoning? To pardon private injuries, to pass by private offences, are indeed laudable actions, and constitute an amiable character. But that very lenity and gentleness, which are such ornaments in a private person, would be weaknesses of the most dangerous tendency, in a judge, or one intrusted with the interests of society. The perfection of the Supreme Being cannot be supposed to consist in a blind propensity to exert his attribute of goodness in every possible way, but in
acting

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I.

acting according to the rectitude of his nature, and in consistency with his other attributes. When therefore the light of nature points out God as kind and good to all his creatures, it with equal certainty declares him to be strictly just and impartial, the Judge, the Lawgiver, the Governor of nature; and considered in this capacity, who can venture to say, whether the ends of his government will allow him to dispense with the violation of any of his sacred laws, or that they may not oblige him to execute regularly the threatenings which he has denounced?

When, therefore, we consider the unspotted nature of God, the perfection of his laws, and attend, on the other hand, to the tenor of our own conduct, we find it imperfect, irregular, and corrupted with various errors. The reflection wounds the conscience with the bitterest anguish and remorse, and terrifies the mind with the idea of an incensed Judge, whose arm wields the sword of vengeance against all iniquity and unrighteousness of men. The soul, oppressed and overwhelmed with the load of guilt searches

searches for every possible suggestion which its natural powers can furnish, to banish its terrors, but finds none in which it can acquiesce. After ransacking the whole extent of human reasoning, it returns disappointed and fatigued with the idle search, without being able to discover one certain argument capable of allaying its misery, of abating the force of those arrows of the Lord with which it is penetrated, or of communicating the proper solace to the agonies of the wounded spirit.

In these deplorable circumstances, the gospel of Christ lends its seasonable aid, and with a kind hand rears the languid, the distressed, the drooping soul. Here the mystery hid from ages and generations is unfolded and made manifest. Here that morning-light, which, though obscured by the types and shadows of the Jewish dispensation, continued to shine with gradual and solemn advances, hath appeared in full splendour in our perfect day. Here we are informed of the most astonishing and endearing event that ever reached the human ear. Hear, O Heavens,

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I.

vens, and give ear, O earth, the Eternal Word, who was in the form of God, and who thought it no robbery to be equal to God, quitted the mansions of eternal felicity, and sojourned upon earth. He who knew no sin, was made sin for us, that we might be the righteousness of God in him. By this great atonement, the handwriting of condemnation is abolished, and we, who were afar off, are brought nigh to God, through the blood of Jesus. He no longer wears the forbidding frown, but every intimidating feature is brightened into a smile of complacency. He looks upon the face of his Anointed, and is well pleased with us. With the feelings of a kind and affectionate parent, he now delights in the secret aspirations of the virtuous mind, and encourageth every approach to his presence.

Nor do the blessings of redemption terminate in a deliverance from the guilt of sin, and from the wrath to come. The gospel informs us, that the Great Captain of our Salvation, who died for our offences, rose again for our justification, and hath irradiated and enlightened the once gloomy

gloomy vale of death for all his followers: That he hath gone before, to prepare a place for us in the celestial regions, and to invite us to an immortal life; a life where the most exquisite and ravishing joys await the righteous spirit; joys, which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, and which it hath not entered into the heart of man to conceive; which shall feel no diminution or abatement, but which flow with an eternal uninterrupted stream.

But, farther, Christianity instructs us to consider this great and exalted Redeemer as still carrying on and completing the scheme of our redemption, by sending forth the influences of his grace to illuminate our hearts, to vindicate the native liberty of the mind, to establish the authority of reason, to regulate every blind and undiscerning propensity, and to erect the empire of reason and religion over all the subordinate faculties of the soul. He, who hath pointed out the road of our duty, who hath marked it by his own peculiar example, and who hath procured for us access to an immortal joy, is represented as still condescending to
regard

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I.

regard the weakness and infirmity of our nature, and as providing the Comforter to lead us unto all truth. He sends his Holy Spirit to guide our wavering steps, to confirm the trembling hand, to invigorate the languid effort, to pave the rugged and slippery path of life, and to preserve our feet from falling. He forms the kind defence from the rough and unmerciful tempest, and gives the secret invisible shield, which wards off every plague from the habitations of our piety. Thus, though he hath now ascended to his God and to our God, to his Father and our Father, he hath not left this world benighted, friendless, or forlorn. From the habitations of his glory, he still urgeth upon the Christian's attentive ear the consolations of his love: "Can a woman forget
" her sucking child, that she should not
" have compassion on the fruit of her
" womb? yea, she may forget; yet will
" I not forget thee." "Behold I have
" graved thee on the palms of my hands."
"I have prayed the Father, and he will
" send the Comforter to guide thee in all
" thy ways." "My grace shall be sufficient

“ ficient for thee: my strength shall be
 “ made perfect in thy weakness.” In SERM.
1.
 thy journey to the heavenly Jerusalem,
 the archers may shoot at thee, and may
 sorely grieve thee, but thy bow shall abide
 in strength, and the arms of thy hands
 shall be made strong, through the power
 of the mighty God of Jacob.

Such, then, is a general view of the
 comfortable discoveries which we derive
 from the instructions of the gospel. This
 is that great salvation, and this the ful-
 ness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.
 Ask now of the days that are past, since
 God created man upon the earth, and en-
 quire from one end of the heaven unto
 the other, whether there has been any
 such thing as this great thing is, or hath
 been heard like unto it?

Does then the Almighty condescend to
 exhibit to our view the amazing treasures
 of his love, to publish to our ears the
 riches of his grace, and shall we conti-
 nue deaf to that heavenly voice, which
 calls us to our highest interests? Shall we
 remain insensible to the risings of trans-
 porting gratitude? Languid and corrupted

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must

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I.

must be the feelings of that heart, indeed, which can form no conception of the value and importance of these gifts of God, nor seek one earnest desire to grasp the proffered blessings. Invited to glory, to honour, to immortality, called to virtue, to freedom, to the glorious liberty of the sons of God, shall we continue to listen with love and pleasure to the noise of those chains and fetters which confine us to this earth in the most abject servitude; or care for those impure passions, which exert the severest tyranny over the soul, which effectually destroy its peace, and introduce disorder and misery into the heart? Blessed are they, indeed, that hear, that feel the influence of the joyful sound; they shall walk continually in the light of the Lord.

Hence we are led to make a few reflections upon a melancholy truth, which is insinuated in the text, and to enquire, why there are some who have not ears to hear the revelations of God. There is a natural correspondence, there is an established connection between the understanding and truth; it may therefore appear

pear surprising, that a religion, which seems to recommend itself by its native worth and dignity, which contains truths so salutary, and discoveries so grateful to the human mind, should still meet with opposition in the world.

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Such an opposition, however, is not founded on any superior reach of understanding, but is the result of a proud and conceited mind. By the impulse of this temper, men are led at once to reject a dispensation, some of whose parts they find mysterious and inexplicable, and which they therefore scruple not to pronounce incredible or impossible. It is allowed, that in this divine system there are some truths which it is above the reach of our imperfect faculties to comprehend or to explain. But where is the man who, by all his sagacity, can point out in any of them any real inconsistency or contradiction to our conceptions, the only circumstances which can be a foundation for unbelief. Let us only consider, what must be the situation of the human mind if it were once established and understood as a general rule, that we are to admit the belief

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of the reality of no objects in nature, but of those whose causes, and the manner of whose existence, we can fully account for. This would be at once to strip nature of all reality, to annihilate the whole material world. We must also reject the belief of our own existence, for no man can in the least pretend to understand how a corporeal and spiritual nature, things so perfectly opposite to each other, come to be connected. Is there one part of the constitution of the mind, is there one object that occurs to the external sight, in which there are not a multitude of mysteries, which no acuteness of thought is able to unfold? Almighty God acts uniformly and consistently with himself in all his operations. All his revelations bear one character, and are published with one voice. The dispensations of his grace are not more difficult to account for than the dispensations of his providence. The man, therefore, whose views are truly great and exalted, will always be deeply conscious of the imperfection of his faculties, and from such a consciousness will be led to conduct his enquiries

enquiries into religion with great humility of mind. He will not expect to be able to explain all the different reasons of the divine procedure, but will rest satisfied with those doctrines which are addressed to his faith, because he finds them accompanied with the highest possible evidence to command his assent.

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The truth is, infidelity is not an error, it is a crime. It does not arise from the understanding, but from the heart. It is not imperfect evidence, it is not want of proof, it is the god of this world which blinds the eyes of those that believe not. The lusts of men make them unwilling to endure sound doctrine. Some, from a desire of popular fame alone, to gratify an inherent principle of vanity, choose to separate themselves from the mob of mankind, to deviate from the dull and undistinguishing path of common belief, and to pursue that singular course of thought, which may argue them persons of deeper reach and penetration than their neighbours. Others are governed by the corrupt principles of the heart, and totally devoted to the things of sense,

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but find it impossible to follow out their favourite pursuits with entire satisfaction, while they are upbraided by the purity of the Christian laws, or haunted by the terrors of the world to come. Their invention, therefore, they send forth in quest of every possible pretext that may destroy this system, or conceal from themselves their terrible prospects. Aided by the corruption of a wicked heart, even the weakest argument appears conclusive. Their minds are darkened with vain imaginations, and through the mists of passion, the amiable form of truth is transmitted to the understanding irregular and distorted.

Such men may congratulate themselves upon their superior abilities : But the infidel is a man of a narrow as well as vicious mind, and wears an heart dead to every great and elevated thought. He is a public enemy to mankind, while he strives, by sophistry and deceit, to wrest from the mind those important principles, so beneficent to the world, so nobly calculated to regulate the conduct and influence the feelings of the heart, and labours to involve it in those mists of scepticism

ticism which are the disgrace of human reason, and which render the life of man more miserable than that of the beasts which perish. SERM.
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Be it our care, then, to possess an humble, candid, and teachable mind. Let us come to Christ, learn true wisdom in the school of the Redeemer, and listen with reverence to those sacred instructions which are calculated to make the servant of God perfect and full, furnished for every good work.

He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. It is God who speaks to us by the ministry of his Son.

The earthly monarch, seated on his throne, and surrounded with pomp and splendour, is heard with reverence. When he opens his mouth, all is silence; attention dwells on every face: And is there no regard due to the words of Him, who sitteth upon the circle of the earth, while all its proudest princes are but as grasshoppers before him; who covereth himself with light as with a garment; who hangs the whole creation on his throne? Shall mortal man be inattentive when his

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Creator uttereth his voice? It is the voice of Him, on whose smile thy life depends, and who is able to save and to destroy; of Him, who planted the ear, who formed the heart of man; whose inspiration gave him understanding, and who therefore hath an unquestionable title to the most reverential attention of all the powers of his mind.

S E R.

S E R M O N II.

ON THE LOVE OF THE WORLD.

I JOHN ii. 15.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

IT is one principal design of the Christian religion to exalt the affections of men above this world, and fix them upon those things that can most completely gratify them, and afford them solid pleasure in the gratification. There are not wanting, however, many among the number of those who profess to know God and to serve him, whose hearts are in truth cemented to this world, whose hopes and fears

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fears are touched only by the external appearances which it presents, who, at the same time, are far from resigning their pretensions to a religious character. Amidst their attachment to profit, to pomp, or to pleasure, they have some secret arts of their own, by which they are able to satisfy themselves that they are the true and acceptable servants of God.

Such characters were abundantly frequent in the days of the Son of man; and had the great Author of our religion appeared in all the pomp and glare of life, ready to heap riches with a liberal hand upon the heads of his adherents; or had he taught them some infallible method of growing speedily great, for shining in the affluence and splendor of this world, he would soon have been surrounded by multitudes, who would have courted his favour with anxious care. Nay, had he but humoured the passions of his hearers, by indulging them in their vices, by teaching them some effectual means of reconciling the love of God and the love of the world, he would soon have become popular in his ministrations, and the idol

idol of a depraved and hypocritical people. But the great Lord from heaven descended on a nobler errand. He came to combat every species of corruption; to set himself in opposition to the reigning and favourite vices of mankind; to break their attachment to things of sense, as utterly inconsistent with the service of God; to give a generous direction to the passions of the heart; to teach the salutary lessons of a disinterested piety; of a sublime and elevated, of a pure and undivided love to God; of an humble but vigorous confidence in the distributions of his Fatherly bounty. Accordingly, we find him assuring us in the most express terms, that no man can serve God and mammon; and after him, this apostle informs us, that "if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."

In discoursing on these words, I shall be naturally led, in the first place, to consider the meaning of the precept itself. It is very plain, that the apostle does not mean to inculcate an entire indifference to this world, and the concerns of it. This would be inconsistent with the present

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sent state of man, and with the designs of providence in placing him in such a state. The life of man in this world is not appointed to be a life of mere speculation, but of action. While we are in the body, we must necessarily have a connection with external things. To supply our present wants, and to provide some share of those things which nature stands in perpetual need of, must require on our part a prudent attention and an active industry. Self-preservation is one of the first principles in human nature; and while providence hath entrusted us with the care of ourselves, he hath also bound us by the strongest obligations to secure the interest and happiness of those who may depend upon us. This is the voice of reason, and this is the law of revelation. It is not, therefore, it cannot be the intention of any such particular precept of religion as that contained in the text, to abstract men wholly from this world, to exclude them from every degree of attention to the enjoyments and the pleasures of this life. Men who have separated themselves from the world may perhaps
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indulge themselves in such wild and visionary notions of the service of God. But such notions are neither consistent with the dictates of reason, nor can they be reconciled with the present condition of human nature. To pay a just and reasonable regard to the external circumstances of our lot; to use every honest endeavour to secure a proper share of present good things; to receive with complacency and satisfaction those comforts of life which the bountiful providence of God sets before us, provided we use them with moderation, and employ them as so many means to inflame our gratitude, and to raise the soul in acts of love to him from whom they are all derived, are duties incumbent on us. It is evident, then, that the precept is to be understood in a limited sense, as prohibiting such an attachment to the external goods of this world, as would totally occupy and engross the mind, and lead it to consider this earth, and its enjoyments, as the principal objects of desire, as the chief and supreme good of man. "Love not the world," says the apostle, with such unreasonable, with

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with such immoderate affection, for whoever thus loveth the world, "the love of the Father is not in him."

We proceed, in the second place, to set before you some considerations, with a view to enforce this important precept. The first argument shall be taken directly from the text, that such an attachment is a sufficient demonstration of the absence of love to God.

Nothing, indeed, can lay so frequent or so effectual obstacles in the way of our eternal salvation, as the temptations which result from the allurements of the world. Here the opinions of men are ever ready to run to the most excessive height, and to lead them to form those false and deceitful estimates which have the most baneful influence upon the heart and character. While our senses are struck with admiration, and occupied with the love of those objects that are to be found around us, to them we are ready immediately to attach ourselves as to something real and solid, as containing the certain sources of the truest solace and joy, and therefore worthy to possess the principal room within

within the heart. Seldom do men suffer themselves to draw aside the gaudy veil which covers the surface, or examine into the empty forms which lie below. Convinced, that in this world alone they can find enjoyment, God and goodness are not in all their thoughts; nor have they eyes to see any comeliness or excellency either in the one or in the other wherefore they should be desired. Almighty God is then excluded from that place within the heart to which he is entitled; another divinity is established there, whom they adore as the sole object of their trust and confidence. Covetousness is, for this reason, most properly called in Scripture idolatry. The world hath become that idol to which the covetous mind perpetually bows, and which receives its warmest and most sincere homage. The sordid and covetous man is formed with an eye continually fixed upon this earth, and is dazzled with the glare of those deceitful pearls which he discovers. Seldom does he lift his thoughts above that bewitching scene; or if he does, he can observe no charms in the countenance of
God

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God to excite his desire or love. All the days of his life he grovels upon the earth, and licks the dust. Thus he disfigures the amiable image of God, vitiates his dispositions, and effaces all the traces of divinity from his soul. His distempered mind exhibits this world, with all its flattering possessions, in so large a form, as entirely fills his eye, and prevents him from discerning the bountiful hand which gives them. His base soul is lost to all the manly exercise of praise and thanksgiving, and becomes an utter stranger to the generous feelings of transporting gratitude. He acknowledgeth not the divine bounty, but blesteth himself in the abundance of his comforts, and arrogantly saith in his heart, that his own might, and the power of his arm, have gotten him his wealth.

As such a disposition must naturally extinguish every direct feeling of piety, so it hath a most fatal influence upon all the parts of social duty.

The social affections are intimately connected with, and properly result from the principle of love to God. He that loves God the Father, will he not naturally love mankind,

mankind, who are the children of that God ; who are consequently his own brethren ; will he not enter with a full feeling into all the distress which may befall them ; count it his duty to communicate the means of relief if they lie within his power, and feel a peculiar pleasure in the exercise of that duty ? But the very reverse of all this is the character of the worldly man. Covetousness hath a most infallible influence to contract the heart, to extinguish every degree of sensibility. The feelings of the worldly man are confined to one point ; they never stray beyond the present. He is lost to every charitable sensation. Before him the tears of the widow, the fatherless, and of him that is ready to perish, fall unpitied. Callous to the distress of his neighbour, with an hard and griping hand he holds fast his wealth, nor parts even with the smallest portion of it, though called upon by the most pathetic voice of distress and misery. . While he himself is at ease in Zion, he is not grieved for the afflictions of Joseph.

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The influence of this disposition is dangerous, and often fatal, to integrity and justice. He that hath the love of the Father residing within his heart, must certainly be supposed to venerate that justice, equity, and unbiaſſed truth, which constitute ſuch important ingredients in the divine character; he will diſcover at all times an unſhaken attachment to theſe ſacred virtues; nor will he ever be prevailed on, by any imaginable conſideration, to act in oppoſition to their dictates. Nay, ſo ſtrong will be his attachment to the calls of equity and truth, that were all human laws, with all their ſanctions, at once annihilated, he would feel the power of a law within dictating to him his duty, and thus would be led, from the natural impuſe of his own mind, to fulfil every claim which his neighbour might have upon him. But where is there any ſecurity for ſuch an adherence to the principles of honour, or even of common juſtice, in that mind which is over-run and engroſſed by worldly deſires? Is not a man of this diſpoſition continually in danger of breaking in upon the moſt ſacred

cred obligations of equity in every case where his own interest, his sole and favourite passion, is concerned? Do men in such situations ever repose much confidence in characters of this kind? Do they not distrust them as capable of dissimulation, of fraud, of every low and infamous art, if these arts can lead to the attainment of that worldly advantage which they have in view? The truth is, let but the proper temptation appear, and it very seldom happens that the covetous man is found scrupling to infringe the venerable laws of equity and truth, and to prostitute all the principles of conscience, provided he can, without personal danger, gratify that sordid principle, which is the constant spring of all his conduct. He is lost to all the inward feelings of the propriety of justice. The demands which his neighbour may have upon him he may be obliged to fulfill by the power of human laws. Even this, however, will be extorted from him with reluctance; and beyond the rigour of law he will not be found to stir one footstep. He is a stran-

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ger to the voice of equity and reason, and never knew their power.

Is not the love of the Father the most natural source of good fellowship and concord with our brethren? and, Is not an immoderate love of the world the very opposite of all this? Does it not most unhappily sour the tempers of men? Obstinate tenacious of its own, and ready to make inroads on the property of others, Is it not the cause of perpetual wrangling, strife, and debate, breaking asunder the tenderest, the dearest connections of private life, and often involving men in the most deadly quarrels?

Thus it must appear in every view we take of this character, that the assertion of the Apostle is just and well founded, and that the love of God cannot be connected with an excessive and extravagant love of the world. It appears, indeed, with an atrocity, with a criminal aspect, above many other vices. Other sins men may fall into through the force of some peculiar temptation; through rashness or human infirmity; but this is a calm deliberate temper, constituting a rooted and habitual

bitual character, and therefore possessing an uniform, settled, and determined malignity. It hath the most fatal tendency to strip men of every good principle, of every one of those excellent feelings which piety naturally forms, and which it labours to promote; it ravages the breast, destroys every virtuous and honourable sentiment, and, like the rod of Aaron, swallows up all the rest of the passions. So just is the observation of the Apostle Paul, "They that will be rich, fall into temptations, and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition: For the love of money is the root of all evil, which, while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Surely, then, as we are Christians, nay, as we are men, it becomes us to check a propensity which communicates so malignant an influence, and has an immediate effect to dispossess the mind of its best and most valuable ornaments.

S E R M O N III.

ON CALUMNY.

PSAL. XV. 3.

*He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor
taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

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IT is no doubt a very melancholy thought to reflect upon the narrow and imperfect influence of religion in the world. Among those who assume the appearance of the most zealous regard and esteem of its sacred discoveries, do we not often meet with some practices strange and unaccountable indeed? For an inward defect of moral principles, or an actual opposition to the precepts of substantial virtue, sometimes disgraces the characters of those who affect the most violent love of
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its laws. A simple acquiescence of mind in the discoveries of divine truth, a singular affection to positive duties, or an high pretension to zeal and fervour of devotion, these, and such other arts, have been invented, to satisfy and lull asleep the conscience, to bend the spirit of piety to the dictates of a vicious mind, or to reconcile an inward corruption of heart, and an irregular conduct, with the purity and virtue of the Christian institutions. But whoever knows any thing at all of the nature and spirit of that religion which came down from heaven, and which is calculated to render men acceptable to God, must be sensible, that it is one uniform and consistent scheme of duty, all the parts of which are intimately and necessarily connected, contributing their united influence to purify and reform the heart, as well as to animate the hopes of men. Hence the Psalmist, in describing the properties of that man whose religious services are acceptable to God, hath set before us the capital features of a character the most strictly virtuous. Among the rest, he marks his freedom from that

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particular vice, which, however frequent in the practice of many who pretend to religion and morality, is absolutely opposite to the nature of both: I mean the sinful use of speech, or that unpardonable liberty, which is too commonly taken, of traducing or aspersing the characters of others.

In discoursing on this subject, I shall endeavour, in the first place, to point out the great depravity and evil tendency of this vice; and the insignificancy, the folly, and worthlessness of that character which is infected by it. In the second place, I shall suggest some advices which may tend to remedy the propensity to slander.

Let us begin then with observing, that this vice, even in its most innocent form, implies great weakness, folly, or vanity. There are some men who have a natural intemperance of tongue, and who, destitute of any solid knowledge, or useful abilities, to carry on any profitable conversation, and void of those principles of modesty which teach a becoming silence and reserve, are continually pouring forth the torrents of a vain or foolish heart,
without

without one distinct conception of the nature of what they are uttering, or ever attending in the least to its consequences. The most common subject that exercises the tongue of these men, because, to the reproach of the world, they find it listened to with the greatest avidity, will always be calumny or slander. Such is one great feature, originally inherent in the character of those who are described by the Apostle Paul by the name of busy bodies, who wander about from house to house, speaking the things which they ought not.

In such minds as these, there resides an insatiable curiosity, which perpetually sends them abroad in search of something, which, when it is found, can be of no intrinsic service to themselves, nor useful to others; nor indeed is any such advantage ever intended by persons of this character. They want only a present employment for themselves. They feel a continual emptiness within, which the most light and frivolous objects are always capable of filling. Their anxiety, however, to know the concerns of others points at an higher object.

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It must be made use of to make you think them somehow or other considerable, on account of a kind of knowledge which they possess, and upon which they value themselves not a little. For as every man is ready to flatter himself that he has something about him which gives him some title to esteem, so they count upon this knowledge of the characters and conditions of others as their peculiar excellency. Such endowments, therefore, are not to lie hid, but must be shewn, because it would undoubtedly be selfish and unfriendly to others not to allow them to share in the precious discoveries; but above all, it would not be doing justice to their own reputation, which they imagine must be increased in the opinion of the persons to whom they transmit these valuable treasures; because, while they shew the reach of their own intelligence, and the great sagacity of their observations, they readily imagine they procure to themselves an *air* of importance; and by the addition of some remarks, which seldom turn out very favourable to the person who is the subject of them, they are continually

tinually giving you to understand how much they are above him.

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Persons of this description may say they mean no harm, nay, pretend great innocence of intention: But such a wantonness of tongue discovers a character full of the most contemptible species of folly, and is always found to produce effects as pernicious as if it proceeded from the most inveterate malice. Is there not here a degree of imbecility, or weakness of mind, if we should call it no worse, which renders a man unworthy of all honour, esteem, or trust? On such persons as these no reliance can be placed; because the very principles from which this disposition ariseth, render them always liable to betray any confidence that may be reposed in them. Hence mankind always agree to pay little regard to such a character; and every sound mind will be ready to follow the wise direction of the ancient poet and philosopher, "To avoid by all" means the prying and inquisitive man;" for you may be assured he must likewise be a babbler; nor can they, whose ears are perpetually open, and greedy to receive

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ceive whatever they can imbibe, ever be able to retain with fidelity the most important secrets committed to their charge. Any thing that is imparted to them you may be sure is soon to be conveyed to others; and if you have suggested that it is proper it should be concealed, you may almost depend upon it that it will be conveyed so much the sooner, because it may add to their dignity and importance to have appeared worthy of being entrusted with such a charge; nor can they refrain from hastening to gratify the ears and satisfy the appetite of others, which they imagine to be as itching and greedy as their own. This disposition is well described by the son of Sirach, and the description is accompanied with some excellent advices on this subject: "A fool," says he, "travailleth with a word, as a woman in labour of a child. As an arrow that sticketh in a man's thigh, so is a word within a fool's belly. The lips of talkers will be telling such things as pertain not to them; but the words of such as have understanding are weighed in a balance. The heart of fools is in their

“ their mouth; but the mouth of the wise
“ is in their heart. He that ruleth his
“ tongue shall live without strife; and he
“ that hateth babbling shall have little
“ evil. Rehearse not unto another what
“ is told unto thee, and thou shalt fare
“ never the worse. Whether it be to a
“ friend or a foe, talk not of other mens
“ lives; and, if thou canst without of-
“ fence, reveal them not: For he heard
“ and observed thee, and when time co-
“ meth, will hate thee.”

A second property, which we scruple not to affix to the evil speaker, is the consciousness of much depravity and bad intention within his own breast. The man who is possessed of much inward worth will find sufficient entertainment within himself, and will have little inclination to enquire into the faults of his neighbour, or to derogate from his character. Warm-ed with love to mankind, he will be slow to hear the injurious accusation, and ready to conceal the fault which he may know. If the character of another is at any time under a cloud, or his actions liable to doubt, that charity, which hop-
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eth all things, which believeth all things, will ever prompt him to take the favourable side, and eagerly grasp at every circumstance that may bid fair for his vindication; and if irresistible evidence force his unwilling assent, far from insulting his misfortune, he will be disposed to draw a veil over his faults, and to restore him in the spirit of meekness, considering himself lest he also be tempted. Under the influence of such friendly and benevolent principles, while he is conscious of no perverse designs within himself, he suspects not the conduct of his neighbours, but is naturally disposed to look upon all their actions with a most favourable and indulgent eye, and attribute them all to an upright and honest intention. But he who is himself possessed of a vicious heart, is haunted with perpetual jealousy and suspicion of others. He knows too much of his own heart to think there can be one good or disinterested action, but imagines that all is the effect of some secret artifice to gain some particular end. He is therefore prone to suspect, and quick to pronounce evil of his neighbours. Their
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most indifferent actions are viewed with an eye which represents them as carrying some peculiar malignity; and every virtuous and generous deed is without scruple ascribed to the operation of some vicious motive, which he finds so strong within his own breast.

In the third place, the slanderer is chargeable with an eminent degree of pride, and with such an immoderate degree of selfishness, as implies the total want of all the feelings of brotherly love. It is the great and distinguishing excellency of him who possesses a generous heart, that he knows himself; that he hath learned, not indeed to underrate his own value, but to form a proper opinion and conception of it. He will therefore rejoice, with that satisfaction which is natural to every virtuous mind, in those applauses which his goodness may deserve; but as the best of men will always be the most sensible of their own faults, and ready to put a moderate value upon their best attainments, so his desires will be satisfied with a moderate share of fame. He will not therefore interfere with that proportion of esteem

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esteem which may fall to the lot of his neighbours, nor think himself in the least injured by their possessing that degree of it to which he may stand justly entitled. But the proud and ambitious man, full of the imaginary importance of his own merit, considers himself as alone entitled to engross the regards and possess the united praises of men. He feels himself materially hurt by having any part of them transferred to another. Seldom will he be found to commend the virtues of his neighbours; or, if any necessary tribute of that kind is extorted from him, it is observed to flow cool, and faint, and partial. For every such accent of praise and commendation he is accustomed to consider as somehow lessening himself, or as at least some acknowledgment of their equality to him. He strives rather by every art to remove them out of the way; and calumny and detraction he finds the most successful instrument for robbing them of all their glory. He imagines his own character will be best established upon the ruins of theirs, and that every spoil he tears from them will contribute to add

a peculiar lustre to himself; and while he thus exposes their weaknesses and follies, by some very unaccountable operation of self-deceit, he is led to conclude, that his own great and superior excellencies shine more bright, and feels a secret satisfaction in anticipating that high applause, which he considers the world as bound, on such a comparison, to bestow. Hence calumny is the offspring of envy, which is the sister of pride, and implies that secret pain which arises within the mind from reflecting upon the superior possessions or reputation of our neighbour. It is this which forms the heart to that hard and unfeeling cast which bears an enmity to every appearance of foreign happiness, and which, deeply vexed at the heights which another has reached, leads us to employ the basest arts to vilify his name, to blast his merit, to tear the crown from his head, and to reduce him to a level with ourselves.

In the fourth place, we may add, that this disposition affords an unquestionable evidence of the meanest and basest spirit. Like the dark and treacherous assassin,

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who dares not venture on an equal combat, but seizes the opportunity of giving his adversary the secret stab behind, the slanderer wounds under the veil of darkness, and propagates unseen that odious tale, which he dares not for his heart avow, or publish before the man whom he injures.

Such is the nature of this crime, the most malignant that can well be imagined, when we reflect, that it proceeds from the most disgraceful passions that can corrupt the heart of man. And equal to the atrocity of its nature, are the calamitous effects which it is found to produce. Calumny has indeed been the vice of every age. It is likewise the reproach of ours. It is not confined to one station of life alone; it is an universal vice. It is not only to be found whispering its artful suspicions within the stately palaces of the great, but it appears within the lonely cottage of the poor, and spreads its baneful poison through the humblest scenes of life. That man's observation must be extremely narrow and confined indeed, who thinks it a rare and uncommon practice.

tice. Mingle a little with the society of mankind, and you will find that calumny furnishes a very general topic of conversation, and is deemed a very innocent and harmless amusement. What is common becomes indeed familiar, and excites but a small degree of horror; but if we will allow ourselves to view this vice in its simple and naked attire, it will be found the occasion of many of the most substantial evils and miseries of human life. It scatters the seeds of strife and animosity, and forms the deepest jealousies among the nearest friends. It pours forth its deadly venom to embitter the sweet cup of domestic happiness; and by its noxious and pestilential vapours, blasts the most valuable comforts, and kills the joys of life.

It is the testimony of Solomon, and every virtuous and honourable heart immediately feels the propriety of the sentiment, that "Reputation is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour than silver or gold." Men may satisfy themselves with forming deceitful estimates of the nature and malignity of crimes. The slanderer may star-

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tle at the thought of theft, of robbery, or of murder; but the injury which he commits by wounding the character of another, is more deeply felt than the loss of the richest treasures, or even of life itself; for by this a man is robbed of his most valuable property, reduced to the most abject and deplorable poverty, and sunk into a state which renders his life insignificant, and existence itself a burden. By this, that credit and esteem in the world, which is the great foundation of his power and influence to benefit himself or mankind, is totally overturned, and with his character often falls his whole support in life.

What shall be done to thee, thou false deceitful slanderer! How little must be thy humanity, which does not regard the agonies of the wound which thy malice gives to the virtuous and feeling heart! How fatal, how extensive, how lasting, and often irreparable, are the miseries thou createst!

Slander is an arrow full of deadly poison, which he shooteth suddenly, and feareth not. Most pathetically is its malignity

lignity described in the words of ancient wisdom: "A backbiting tongue hath dis-
 " quieted many. Strong cities hath it
 " pulled down, and overthrown the hou-
 " ses of great men. The stroke of the
 " whip maketh marks in the flesh; but
 " the stroke of the tongue breaketh the
 " bones. Many have fallen by the edge
 " of the sword, but not so many as have
 " fallen by the tongue. Well is he that
 " is defended from it, and hath not pas-
 " sed through the venom thereof; who
 " hath not drawn the yoke thereof, nor
 " hath been bound in her bands: For the
 " yoke thereof is a yoke of iron, and the
 " bands thereof are bands of brass; the
 " death thereof is an evil death; the
 " grave were far better than it." Well
 is it likewise represented by the Apostle
 James, as "A fire, a world of iniquity,
 " which polluteth the whole body, which
 " setteth on fire the course of nature, and
 " is itself set on fire of hell."

The calamitous effects of this vice are
 not confined wholly to those against whom
 the slander is directed, but often, nay, ge-
 nerally indeed, return upon the slanderer

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himself. Let me recal to your minds those suspicions and fears, those dangers and troubles, which must fall to his lot, who applies himself to these uncharitable arts. By his injurious accusations must he not necessarily entail upon himself the deepest resentment of others, and expect to meet with the like in his turn? By wounding others in the most tender and feeling part, must he not raise the fiercest storms of just and reasonable wrath against himself, and thus rush into the greatest danger? He cannot be said to act either an honourable or prudent part for himself. Mankind soon understand his character, and naturally hold him in abhorrence. He is considered as the general pest of the world; the poisoner of all its most valuable joys; and therefore is shunned by every man who possesses any degree of candour or humanity, or who is desirous to preserve his own reputation. Dreadful, then, as this vice is in itself, and utterly inconsistent with the spirit of religion, we may reasonably be amazed beyond measure, to find one single instance of it in the life of a Christian. Let no man

man please himself with varnishing over the slanders he may utter, with the gentle name of the innocent strokes of wit and raillery. However his intentions may appear to himself, such a conduct is highly criminal in its nature, implying great depravity of spirit, an extreme indifference to the principles of virtue and truth, and to the reputation, the welfare, and the good of others. Like the madman, who scattereth fire-brands, arrows, and death, so is he that slandereth his neighbour, and saith, Am I not in sport?

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SER-

S E R M O N IV.

ON CALUMNY.

PSAL. XV. 3.

*He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor
taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.*

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THE sons of men, who, by the peculiar favour of providence, occupy the supreme rank here, were not stationed in this scene, merely under the character of contemplative beings. There are evidently desires and propensities within, which lead them to the love of society; to establish those connections with others upon which their own happiness and the general welfare of the species were appointed to depend. And that they might be properly furnished for this end, and
well

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well qualified to fulfil those great and excellent purposes of society, for which they are so visibly formed, they were endowed with a power of communicating their thoughts to others. The tongue is called in Scripture, "the glory of man," because it is one of the most precious and ornamental faculties which he hath received from heaven; by which he is enabled to celebrate the praises of his high Creator; to pour forth the treasures of mutual instruction; and in many different ways to contribute to the public felicity. This, however, like all the other great and inestimable gifts of providence, is capable of being perverted, and has suffered many and grievous abuses. Instead of spreading the stores of peace and joy so far as its voice can reach, the tongue is often found to have recourse to the most unrighteous arts to kindle the flames of strife and contention in the world, and to make the most dreadful ravages on all the principles of charity and justice itself.

For this reason, I have been endeavouring to guard you against one of those great vices which belong to the tongue,

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I mean Calumny, or Slander. Without resuming any thing that has been said, we now proceed to suggest some advices, which, by the blessing of God, may contribute to remedy this wanton and malicious propensity.

In the first place, then, let us all be engaged to begin with exercising our severity and correction upon ourselves. A desire to interfere with the concerns and behaviour of others might perhaps admit of some excuse, were not every man furnished with sufficient employment at home to occupy all his attention and care. Let every man study to do his own business. And what is the business of every man, but to know himself, to correct and amend his own faults, and to endeavour to become wiser and better; a business to which he who is inclined to censure the actions of others ought most particularly to attend. For he who ventures to accuse his neighbour hath great need to look well after his own conduct, and to consider that he makes a very ridiculous figure by reproaching others, if he deserves reproach himself. Let us
then

then learn an intimate acquaintance with SERM.
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our own hearts ; for the better we understand these, the more humble will we be, the more remarkable for the absence of all harsh suspicions, and the more disposed to be favourable to the miscarriages of others.

Hence, in the second place, while we are occupied with a proper attention to the state of our own minds, let it be our study above all things, to purify them from all vitious desires, from all disorderly passions, from all malicious and uncharitable views. We have endeavoured to point out the internal diseases of which this vice is the certain symptom ; and, till these are removed, there can be no security, no prevention of this effect. If the fountain be polluted, the streams must be unclean. “ Can a fountain,” says the Apostle James, “ send out at the same place sweet waters and bitter? Can a fig-tree bear olive berries, or a vine figs?” “ How can ye being evil,” says our Lord, “ speak good things, for from the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.” — “ A good man, out of the good
“ treasure

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“treasure of the heart, bringeth forth
 “good things; and an evil man, out of
 “the evil treasure of the heart, bringeth
 “forth evil things.” Let it then be our
 principal care, to tame the fury of pas-
 sion that may lodge within our breasts;
 the only effectual method to render our
 spirits more regular.

In the third place, let us accustom our-
 selves, seriously and deeply, to reflect upon
 the great injustice and cruelty which is
 inflicted upon our neighbour by calumny
 and defamation. The man who deals in
 these wretched instruments of malice, is
 always observed to be very considerable
 in his own opinion, and extremely anxi-
 ous that he should be thought so in the opi-
 nion of others. For that is one of the
 great foundations of this vitious practice.
 Here then let him consider what regard
 he has for his own reputation, how de-
 sirous he is that all men should venerate
 him, and put the most friendly interpre-
 tation upon his actions. Let him learn to
 substitute himself in the room of those
 whom he thus abuses, let him appropriate
 their case to himself. Let him reflect,
 how

how much he would complain of injustice and barbarity, were others to view his conduct with that malicious eye, and treat it with that insolent satire, which he is found to apply without scruple to them. Remember then, and learn at last to obey that rule, which is the foundation of all common equity, and of Christian justice, "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so unto them; for this is the law and the prophets."

In the fourth place, let us habitually represent to our minds, that inward pleasure and self-complacency, which result from the wise and benevolent government of speech. There is not, perhaps, to be found a more fertile source, either of misery or consolation to every individual, than the regular or imprudent government of the tongue. "A perverse tongue," says Solomon, "is a breach in the spirit." The hurt it gives to others, makes a breach upon the comfort of the defamer himself, and miserably interrupts his own happiness. This, every one who is notoriously guilty of this vice is obliged to feel in the highest degree; and of this, every

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every man hath an opportunity to form some sort of judgment from his own experience. For, even the man whose heart may be abundantly virtuous and honourable, and whose speech in general may be guarded by wisdom, and the love of his neighbour, if he has any sensibility, any tender feelings, hath found himself deeply affected with any rash or inadvertent speech which may have dropt from him, and which never recurs to his memory without much self-reproach and repentance. But, look upon the other side, and observe the advantages which result to every character that is gentle and peaceable, and an enemy to all severity and reproach. When the tongue of man is employed in the pious and beneficent offices for which it was given; to declare the glory of its maker; to instil the precepts of Divine knowledge into the ignorant breast; to convey proper advice to the perplexed heart; to vindicate the injured reputation; or by administering seasonable consolation to support the distressed spirit; how divine is that pleasure which it must then minister to the soul, in all the seasons

of

of reflection ! Such a wholesome tongue is beautifully compared by Solomon to a tree of life. It puts forth the most pleasant blossoms ; it presents us with a delicate and nourishing fruit ; its wide extended branches afford an happy refuge from the storm ; and to the oppressed spirit, they yield a welcome shadow from the heat. Such a beneficent character implies at the same time that humility and modesty of mind, which is the greatest ornament to the man, endearing him to the affections of all, and giving him always peace and tranquillity at home ; because he is conscious of having occasioned no broils or discord to others. How must men delight in cultivating acquaintance and friendship with one whose calmness of temper, and sweetness of disposition, render his company so pleasant and agreeable, and his character so worthy of their affection and confidence.

In the fifth place, let us lay to heart, how offensive it must be to the great LORD and Judge of all, whose children and subjects we are, to allow ourselves in any acts of severity or malice to others.

Such

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Such a conduct is perfectly opposite to his great Image, which it is the highest glory of humanity to resemble. He is not extreme to mark what we do amiss. He hideth his face from our sins, and passeth by our transgressions. He remembers that we are but dust, and is ever ready to extenuate our offences; and through JESUS CHRIST, delighteth in mercy. How can the rigorous, the censorious, the virulent slanderer, ever be thought the follower of this God? He is an utter stranger to his Spirit and character. He is a rebel to his government and laws; and he hath reason to expect the most rigorous effects of his vindictive justice. To him God will infallibly impute at last, all that unhappy train of evils which have been the consequence of his unbridled malice. Then, by their words shall men be justified, and by their words shall they be condemned. He shall have judgment without mercy, who hath shewn no mercy.

In the last place, let us, with unwearied zeal, labour to acquire those lovely graces, which are the characteristical ornaments of

of our religion. Never was there so sublime an institution as Christianity, which is founded in love, and whose greatest glory it is to educate its disciples in those peaceful virtues which are most friendly to their own internal tranquillity, and most beneficent and generous to the world. Let us learn a deep acquaintance with the oracles of God; that sacred philosophy, from whose study none ever returned without becoming a wiser and a better man. Let us learn of Him who was meek and lowly in heart. Let us come to Christ, learn true wisdom in the school of the Redeemer, and listen to the instructions of this best of teachers, which will gradually form our minds to sweetness, charity and love. Let us open our hearts to the influences of the great Father of our spirits, beseeching and intreating him to plant there the most amiable fruits of his religion. Thus will our souls naturally catch the spirit of that God whom they adore, and imbibe the loving and benevolent temper of those heavenly regions where he resides, and

E

where

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where the blest inhabitants, utter strangers to all the dissonance of wrath, virulence and malice, power forth their hearts in the warmest ecstasies of friendship to one another, and are united in ties of love that can never be dissolved or impaired.

S E R.

S E R M O N V.

ON THE PROGRESS OF HOLINESS.

Prov. iv. 18.

*But the path of the Just is as the shining
light, &c.*

THESE words contain a lively description of the progressive course of virtue and holiness. They are founded on a noble image, which, as it is familiar to every eye, is beautiful and obvious to the weakest understanding. As the morning light breaks through the shades of night and darkness, and advances to its meridian splendour, so the pious mind, having dispelled the clouds of ignorance and error, is gradually enlightened by the heavenly rays of Divine wisdom, and rises

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by

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by progressive steps to higher acquisitions, to more perfect attainments of virtue.

In discoursing from these words, I shall endeavour, in the first place, to point out the character of him who may properly merit the name of the just man, whose "path shineth more and more unto the perfect day."

In the second place, to offer some arguments to enforce the imitation of this just and progressive character.

In the last place, to suggest some advices, which, by the blessing of God, may be of use to promote our growth in grace.

I return to the first of these, To point out the character of him who may properly merit the name of the just man, whose path "shineth more and more unto the perfect day." And here it will be necessary to observe, that the term *just* is not always in Scripture limited to that one capital virtue, which we commonly understand by that name, but is generally used in a more extensive sense, and applied to signify every act of an unreserved obedience; nor indeed can that
man

man be properly and truly called just, who satisfies himself with a compliance with the rules of social duty, while he neglects the acts of piety to his God. His virtue is improperly founded; he violates one of the most essential rules of justice itself, while he withholds those returns of gratitude and love which are due to the great Author and Preserver of his being.

Far, therefore, from being of the opinion of those who consider religion and morality as distinct things, and maintain, that the latter may be duly and regularly performed without any regard paid to the former, he who may lay claim to the character of the just man, will consider religion, or his duty to his Creator, as the only proper foundation and source of his morality, and therefore of primary obligation. To be instructed in this important article, he will consult the works of the Supreme Being, and collect from these the traces of his perfections. But, deeply sensible of the great imperfection of natural discoveries, and still earnestly inquisitive after the will of God, he will search for some surer guide to lead to his

E 3 duty,

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duty, and rejoice in the more ample manifestation of the Divine mind contained in the gospel. With reverence he will listen to the dictates of revelation, and learn the duty which he owes to his Maker. While he meditates upon the glorious perfections of his character, the fire will burn in his breast, and pure and uncorrupted will rise the pious flame of adoration unto heaven.

Nor will he content himself with the more secret acts of a devout heart, but rejoice at every public occasion of shewing forth the praises of his Creator. He will be glad when it is said unto him, "Go up unto the house of God;" when his feet are allowed to stand within the gates of Jerusalem. No hypocrisy, no desire of reputation from the world, will guide his feet thither; but an humble deference to the appointments of his God, and a fervent desire to mingle his tribute of praise with the company of those who fear his holy Name.

The sacred attributes of the Divine character which excite his devotion, will not fail, at the same time, to produce every

ry becoming disposition in his heart, and every correspondent duty in his life.

While he reverenceth his Almighty power, he will stand in awe to offend the greatest of all beings. He will, above all things, dread his displeasure, and fly from sin, which is the great object of it. While he adores his untainted purity, he will mourn over his own corruption, and study to conform himself to the image of his holiness. While he venerates his infinite wisdom, he will submit to the corrections of his providence; nor will he murmur at that intricacy which may involve his administration. While he admires his inflexible veracity, and unbiaſſed truth, he will expreſs his unfeigned regard, by an undeviating adherence to their ſacred rules; and while he contemplates, with love and gratitude, that bounty which his liberal hand ſcatters through the univerſe, he will ſtrive to cheriſh within his own breaſt the ſame benevolent diſpoſition, and delineate in his life that godlike virtue.

Penetrated with a full ſenſe of the preſent corrupted ſtate of humanity, he will

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triumph in those methods which the love of God hath invented to extricate him from misery, and reinstate him in the possession of the Divine favour, and of the most inestimable spiritual blessings. That Jesus, who died for his sins, and upon whose satisfaction alone he depends for his salvation, he will take for the example of his life, for the standard of his practice. Constant, sincere and warm in his affections, no selfish views will ever draw him aside from the sacred paths of friendship; nor will he entertain one purpose of the heart inconsistent with its venerable laws. But still, unfettered by private attachments, his heart will glow with love to mankind, and his hand be open to relieve their wants.

Ever tender of his neighbour's reputation, he will set a watch over the door of his lips, that he offend not with his tongue. He will be unwilling to listen to the voice of slander, and ever ready to hide the fault which he knows. In all the transactions of social life, he will wear the lips of truth. Integrity, candour and sincerity, will ever preserve his heart.

And

And in general, through the whole course of life, he will study to pursue, with uniform steps, the open path of honour and of virtue, unmoved by allurements, unawed by dangers.

Such may be the character of the just man, and such while he continues, he will be anxious to grow and excel in all the fruits of righteousness. For the righteous will hold on in his way, and he that hath clean hands will wax stronger and stronger.

The possibility of making great attainments in virtue, is certainly no imaginary notion. We all know to what astonishing heights of hardiness, of strength, and of agility, the human body is often carried by habit and exercise. And are not the faculties of the mind equally improvable, and capable of receiving as high degrees of perfection? Certain it is, that wherever true and genuine virtue lives within the breast, it will manifest its existence there, by rising and flourishing in the outward conduct. It is no sluggish or dormant principle, but something that
animates

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animates and enlivens the heart, and urges on to exercise, to progress in virtue.

The mind of a pious man lies ever open to entertain and cherish the sacred influences of that grace which descendeth from above; and, like the tree planted by the rivers of waters, his virtue, wet with the dews of heaven, riseth with a quick and rapid progress, and is adorned with a glorious fruit. His piety, founded upon its proper principles, will always strive to attain a more intimate acquaintance with his God, and a more exact conformity to his will. The beauties of holiness will acquire an additional dignity and lustre in his eyes, and determine him to the more ardent love of it. The deformity of vice will continually increase, and he will hate it with a more perfect hatred. Having felt the consolation that is in Christ Jesus, the comfort of love, and the fellowship of the Spirit, the grateful relish will inflame his heart with ardent aspirations after larger and more ample communications of the Divine grace. For this purpose, he will be anxious to rise and to excel in all these acts of religious obedience

obedience which may recommend him to the more intimate complacency of his heavenly Father, and to put forth his most vigorous endeavours, that he may approach nearer to the unity of the faith, and of the "knowledge of the Son of God, "to the measure of the stature of a perfect man in Christ Jesus."

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I proceed, in the second place, to offer some arguments to enforce the imitation of this just and progressive character.

The first argument shall be taken from the great and genuine satisfaction with which it is attended. Some there are who consider religion as wearing a dark and melancholy aspect, as bearing a perpetual enmity to joy and pleasure. Such are but little acquainted with its power and influence.

When we consider any course of life with a view to form a proper estimate of its real value, or to judge whether it is eligible by a rational mind, we ought not to attend to one momentary and transient folly of pleasure which it may yield, but to

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to inquire how far it is suited to render that pleasure permanent and durable, to give to it an influence uniform and universal. For such is evidently the constitution of the human mind, that the highest pleasure it is capable of feeling is not derived from the present sensation, but from those acts which are calculated to endure the inquiry of our cooler moments, to bear the scrutiny of severe reflection.

Let this rule be applied to the pursuits of sin, and where will appear its claim to our affections or choice. "The way of the wicked," says Solomon, in the verse immediately following the text, "is darkness, he knows not at what he stumbles." The path he treads lies through a dark and dreary solitude, where deceitful forms do perpetually arise to mock his sight, and to seduce his steps. He indulgeth his palate with the bewitching pleasures which appear upon the road; but every pleasure he tastes forms itself into a dreadful fury, which frowns upon his peace, and wounds him with the stings of bitter anguish and remorse.

But

But it is the great excellency of a religious life, that it happily corresponds in every respect to this original structure of the mind, and is calculated to increase the sources of agreeable reflection according to our advances in it. Far from impairing the natural funds of satisfaction, it allows, it commands the moderate use of every innocent enjoyment, gives it a peculiar relish, refines and improves upon every pleasure, and superadds that source of joy which the world knoweth not of. They who have proceeded farthest in this sublime and heavenly road, know well what noble satisfaction attends every successive step, and can abundantly witness, that every improvement is followed by a proportionable share of happiness.

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Some there are who consider religion as something hostile to their ease, as a life of perpetual toil, difficulty and labour. But from whence proceeds that suspicion? It is the voice of indolence. And what is indolence? It is the fatal disease of the soul; the lethargy that stagnates the spirit, and stops the pulse of life.

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life. Let but its influence fasten upon the mind, it will spread a rust to corrode all its powers, and put an end to every valuable effort. Let but its cold and iron hand grasp the heart, and it will damp and extinguish the vital energy, which beats for great and worthy deeds. It whispers, "yet a little sleep, yet a little slumber, yet a little folding of the hands to sleep;" listen to its voice, indulge its power, and thou shalt be a coward for life. It will recount innumerable difficulties in every case, to stagger thy resolution, and to overawe every generous purpose of the heart.

Difficulties we must allow there are in religion; but it is the entrance to its path alone which is rugged and arduous. As we advance, we find the road smooth and peaceful, and every terror that appeared at first gradually retiring, or converted into pleasure by repeated exercise. As the man unaccustomed to travel, with reluctance undertakes the journey, and is easily fatigued, till habit and exercise strengthen his limbs, and perseverance renders it easy and delightful; so, to the
mind

mind unexperienced in the ways of God, SERM.
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the first efforts are painful and troublesome. To “mortify the flesh, with the
“affections and lusts; to cut off the right
“hand, and to pluck out the right eye;”
are exercises laborious to flesh and blood.

But, from these severer operations, the next step is into the regions of peace and joy. Custom moulds and forms the mind to the love of virtue; and what was begun with trouble is carried on with ease, and advances into delight and joy. Every successive step leads to a nobler prospect; conscience attends to pour its delicate and animating applause into the heart, and heightens its voice on every higher attainment that we gain. Our views become more extensive and enlarged, and we find ourselves approaching nearer to the glorious end of our faith, even the salvation of our souls. We feel the most exquisite satisfaction from the gradual decay of these vicious passions which created an enmity to the will of God, and from the more vigorous exercise of those higher powers which are habituated to taste, with fuller relish, the joys

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joys of the heavenly state. With an inexpressible pleasure we look back on the progress and advancement of every divine grace, and count the inestimable value of these additional virtues, which by patience and perseverance we have acquired. How noble, how ravishing the pleasures resulting from steadfast and progressive virtue. The triumphs which Christian fortitude bestows exhilarate the spirit, and pour more genuine joy into the heart than all the acclamations that ever attended the proudest conqueror upon earth. Such, in general, are the glories which gladden and adorn all the path of the just, that, to the mind which can aright conceive their power, they must appear to possess a dignity and lustre infinitely superior to the highest refinements of luxury and sense.

But still, an absolute perfection is not the present lot of human nature. The best of characters is sullied with various errors, and the highest stage of virtue upon earth is frail and imperfect. The scripture hath concluded all under sin. "What is man
" that he should be clean, or he that is
" born

“ born of a woman, that he should be
“ righteous ? There is not a just man that
“ liveth and sinneth not.” This consideration of the general, the universal depravity of human nature, renders the present state of religious obedience upon earth still but the foundation of a mixed and tainted joy. The man whose attainments in piety are carried to the highest pitch they are capable of reaching in this life, is yet never able entirely to divest himself of those fetters which often curb his aspirations towards God, which load the wing of his soul, and impede its flight. He often feels within himself the power of those secret errors of the heart, which fill him with anxiety, with uneasiness and fears.

Thus an imperfect virtue, as that of our nature must always be, is at best but the source of an imperfect joy. Which leads me, in the second place, to mention another argument to excite our progress in piety, taken from the consideration of that future state, which in our text is intimated under the notion of the perfect day.

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The blessedness of the heavenly Jerusalem is often in Scripture set before us, under the metaphor of a perfect day. It is called a state where "there shall be no night." It is named "the inheritance of the saints in light." Objects these, the most grateful and transporting to our senses, and intended to denote an everlasting deliverance from all inward darkness and perplexity, from every present source of vexation and disquietude; the full enlightening of our minds; the complete perfection of our reason, and the possession of the most substantial positive blessings. How eagerly does the pious mind aspire after an uniform obedience to the will of God! But such is the infirmity of the soul, that numberless blemishes cleave to our most perfect services, furnish us with a train of severe and bitter reflections, and form those clouds and darkness which overcast the peace of the mind. But when we reach the possession of that perfect day, we shall feel ourselves totally delivered from all possibility of offending God. Clothed with the garments of unspotted righteousness, and

and presented by the meritorious hands of our great Advocate with the Father, without spot or blemish, or wrinkle, or any such thing, we shall walk the streets of the holy city with secure and easy steps, unmolested by those temptations which continually assault us upon earth.

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There "the spirits of just men shall be made perfect," and attain the highest improvement of all their powers. The understanding shall be purified from every error, and reach the highest discoveries of truth. Exalted to the highest parts of the Creator's works, we shall enjoy the most extensive and ravishing prospects; no prejudices to mislead; no clouds to obscure the eye of the mind; but truth shining forth with clear and splendid rays, without any danger of disappointment or mistake. Nor shall our discoveries ever have an end; but some new truth shall be continually dawning upon the understanding; some undiscovered treasure arising to the view. And surely there cannot enter into the human mind a nobler thought, than to reflect upon the eternal progression of its faculties.

SERM.

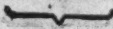
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While our understandings improve in knowledge, the feelings of the heart shall receive an equal vigour, and our love to God shall rise in exact proportion as our prospect widens; this new flame within the breast shall devour every inferior passion; and, by the continual increase of its power, we shall be gradually assimilated to his perfect nature. Our affections shall never suffer that interruption, or feel that languor, which is often the complaint of the pious mind upon earth; but shall glow and burn with an unceasing, with an undiminished ardour.

And who would not struggle hard for such a noble happiness as this. O blessed and glorious day, when we shall finally be "delivered from this body of sin and death," and admitted into these most delightful regions, the habitation of triumphant virtue, and undisturbed peace. O my soul, art thou not awake at the transporting thought! Does there reside within thy frame one spark of ambition, and shall it not kindle at the enlivening prospect! Leave every low and grovelling pursuit to men of dull and carnal minds, who

who know no higher good. Be heaven ever thy aim, thy constant expectation; on this everlasting possession let thine eye be steadily fixed, and let every step of thy life tend to this immortal habitation!

In the third place, to quicken our progress in this divine art, let us consider, that the measure of our future felicity shall correspond to our present advances in holiness. Certain indeed it is, that every spirit that shall inhabit those superior regions, shall be completely and perfectly blessed; that is, shall possess an happiness equal to its nature, and suited to its capacities of enjoyment. But it is equally certain that there are degrees, that there are different measures of that happiness. It is the language of Scripture, "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have the more abundantly." It is equitable in itself, ("and shall not the Judge of all the earth do righteously,") that he who hath maintained the steadiest opposition to every temptation, and continued to abound in every good work, should be entitled to the most glorious recompense, and enjoy the greatest reward

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in heaven. It is, besides, implied in the very reason of things, that he who hath advanced farthest in the paths of virtue, is hereby naturally qualified to receive the most ample communications of this spiritual felicity. The man who hath but just acquired the elements of any science, is incapable of comprehending those sublime discoveries which the more improved understanding can easily reach. So he who has but just entered upon the study of virtue, on whom the light of Divine wisdom hath but just begun to dawn, is unable to admit the deepest impressions of Divine joys. That bright effulgence of celestial glory, which shall ravish and transport the strong eye, would dazzle and confound the weak imperfect sight; and those full and ample draughts of pleasure, which the enlarged and expanded heart will receive with unutterable delight, can never enter into the narrow and unopened mind. Does then ambition or generous hope warm our breast? Let us display their influence, by an earnest application to improve our minds, and to excel in every Divine grace, that we may
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at last wear a nobler crown, and be admitted to a more exceeding weight of glory.

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We now proceed to suggest some advices, which, by the blessing of God, may be of use to promote our growth in grace.

In the first place, then, it will be necessary to consider well the importance of this object, and to impress upon the heart a deep and lasting conviction, that virtue is the most profitable, the most valuable acquisition in human life. This impression will have a powerful tendency to promote the regular direction of all our desires, and to preserve our affections in one steady channel.

What an amazing power do the things of this earth exert over the minds of worldly men! How much do they engross their thoughts, excite their zeal, and render their minds wonderfully alert, and full of devices to compass that object which appears to be their chief good. Are then the allurements of carnal and sensual things so strong, as to draw after them the whole current of the soul; and shall the charms of piety be accounted in-

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ferior to the attractions of sense, incapable of collecting and binding the desires of the heart? Fully informed with just and reasonable views, never would the mind be cold and indifferent about concerns so high and valuable, nor be attracted by trifling and idle pursuits.

In the second place, let us seriously consider the necessity of this religious progress, for securing the very existence of piety within the breast. There is no such thing as being stationary in a religious course. He that does not go forward is in imminent danger of growing worse, and of relapsing into the paths of sin. The mind of man is an active principle, its powers must be employed; if they are not occupied in the attentive pursuit of every virtuous attainment, they will lie open to those solicitations which offer them employment upon vicious objects. And what a weak and slippery hold hath the mind, in this situation, of those attainments which it hath already reached! Such a languid and imperfect principle of goodness hath no power to resist, or counteract,

teract, the operation of those temptations which continually strive to draw it back into the ways of sin. SERM.
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Thus, there is undoubtedly no security, even for the preservation of innocence and goodness, but from an unremitted anxiety to excel in those exercises which have an happy influence to strengthen the principle of virtue itself. And as all principles whatever are confirmed and improved by practice, so this must issue in the utter extinction of vicious habits, in rendering virtue and religion habitual to the soul, and raising us to that confirmed state of goodness upon which vicious temptations will have little effect, and leave behind them no fatal impressions.

In the third place, let us ever set before our eyes the most perfect models of character, and strive to approach as near as possible to their excellencies. The man whose heart is warmed with the love of any great and noble object, or who heartily desires to shine in all the beauties of virtue, ought not to content himself with the indolent art of comparing his

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his own character with that of others around him, who may perhaps possess the name of pious and good in the world, but ought to propose to himself the brightest and most unspotted standard. Be it our ambition, with humility and zeal, to aspire after the resemblance of the Great God himself, to imitate his moral excellencies, as they are delineated in all his works; as they are revealed in his word; but especially as they are illustrated in the face of Jesus. "God no man hath seen, nor can see at any time; but the only begotten, who dwelt in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him to men:" Here is the pattern of universal influence, where "godliness, temperance, brotherly kindness, and charity," all shine with an illustrious splendor and dignity. To this unspotted example let our eyes be perpetually turned; on this unerring model let us be careful to form our minds; and wherever this Divine Saviour leads, let us be determined to follow him with faithful, with firm, with undeviating steps.

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In the fourth place, let us cherish in our minds a constant, deep, and reverential sense of the presence of God, and of his watchful attention to all our conduct.

The Most High God filleth heaven and earth with his presence. "Known to him" are all the works of men, from the foundation of the world. Every creature is manifest in his sight. He bringeth to light the hidden things of darkness. He maketh manifest the secret counsels of the heart. He weigheth the hearts; he pondereth the spirits of men; he knoweth all our foolishness; and our most secret sins he setteth in the light of his countenance." The presence of an earthly monarch will strike the mind with reverence and awe; the eye of the man venerable for sanctity will curb the risings of the licentious heart; politeness and good manners will check the immoderate sallies that might offend the virtuous company; and is there no regard due to the presence of Him by whom kings reign, on whose favour thy life depends,

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depends, and who, when he pleaseth, can frown thee to dust.

Convinced that we ever act in his venerable presence, how will we blush at every secret thought that forms itself within the breast to offend his delicate and unspotted eye, and curb with an eager care, every intruding passion that may have an immediate tendency, or a more remote influence, to loosen our affections to so excellent a Being? What a mighty ambition must this create within the breast, to excel in every virtuous ornament which may recommend us to the more complacent regards of our heavenly Father, whose eyes are upon all the ways and works of the children of men, but whose delights are only with the pure in heart? For as an affectionate parent views with great delight the dawnings of wisdom in the mind of his favourite child; beholds with inexpressible satisfaction the gradual opening of his most valuable powers, and his improvement in every important science; so, our Father in heaven looks with great complacency on every rising

rising virtue in his childrens breasts, on every nearer approach they make to the moral excellencies of his character.

In the fifth place, Let us be habitually attentive to the state of our own hearts. To attain the knowledge of ourselves ought to be the chief study and business of our lives, as it is of all studies the most essential to our improvement. By a serious attention to our inward state, we will immediately discover every rising propensity to vice, as soon as it begins to appear, and be able to extirpate it with ease, before it hath fastened itself upon the heart. By such a solemn and frequent review of the qualities of the heart, we will be conscious of the progress and advancement of every divine grace; will derive that satisfaction and joy which our Creator hath appointed as the natural reward of progressive virtue, which will encourage us in the work of the Lord; invigorate our arm against all opposition; and lead the soul forward to more sublime attainments, to more elevated heights of holiness.

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In the last place, Let us be careful to attend, with serious devotion, on all the public ordinances of religion, on all the positive institutions of divine grace, which God hath appointed as the great instruments of spiritual improvement. These have a direct tendency to animate and strengthen our pious graces; to make the servant of God perfect, and fully furnished for every good work: And to every endeavour let us add earnest and fervent prayer to the God and Father of our spirits, and by humble supplication maintain a constant intercourse and correspondence with heaven. This is the great channel which God hath appointed to convey his spiritual gifts to men. Prayer hath besides, in itself, a natural tendency to widen and enlarge the heart of man; to raise it above the power of all the false terrors and allurements of this vain world; and to determine it to the closest imitation of the excellencies of that God whom we are thus accustomed most piously to love, and most ardently to adore.

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And now, may the God of all grace fulfil in our souls all the purposes of his benevolence, and the work of faith with power, sanctifying us in soul, in body, and in spirit; making us perfect to do his will, and working in us whatever is well-pleasing and acceptable in his sight.

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ON THE GOODNESS OF GOD.

*How precious also are thy thoughts unto me,
O God! how great is the sum of them! If
I should count them, they are more in num-
ber than the sand: When I awake, I am
still with thee.*

THE Almighty hath established his throne in the heavens, but his kingdom, his natural and moral government, extends to, and ruleth over all. In this lower world, numerous are the indications of infinite perfection: Various and repeated displays of power, wisdom, and goodness, run through all the works of nature, distinguish every part of the wide creation, and form an ample field in which the sons of men may expatiate with wonder and delight; a scene worthy of the deepest

deepest study, the most serious contemplation of a rational mind. All the attributes of the Supreme Being produce in our hearts their correspondent affections; his omnipotence, eternity, and immensity, create fear, astonishment, and awe; his wisdom, justice, and truth, excite veneration, respect, and regard: but it is his goodness peculiarly exerted towards the sons of men, which strikes the finest strings of the soul, which touches the tenderest sentiments that inhabit the heart, and excites delight, and love, and warm affection. Without this amiable perfection, unsatisfying would be our notions of God; imperfect and irregular our service to him: without this, did we view his omnipotent and uncontrolled power, horror and wild disorder must unavoidably ensue. It is this attribute which regulates the destination of the thunder that arms his Almighty hand, which warrants the exertions of his all-powerful arm, which sweetens every feature of the Divine countenance, and by representing his unlimited power, as continually employ-

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ed to increase, by infinite and incomprehensible means, the real good and felicity of his creatures, constitutes him the proper object of our filial confidence and attachment, and produces in the heart the noblest train of the most sublime and heavenly graces.

In such endearing views of the Supreme Being, the royal psalmist ever triumphs and exults, and seems to dwell with peculiar delight on the contemplation of divine love. After celebrating, in the sublimest strains, and with the most noble and inimitable strokes of eastern eloquence, the awful omniscience of God, he breaks out into this pious and animated address: "How precious," how various and inestimable, are the expressions of thy goodness "unto me, O God! how great" their number, how immense is their amount! If I should attempt to calculate them, the sum would swell beyond the myriads of sands upon the sea-shore: "when I awake, I am still with thee;" this delightful theme is the object of my first and earliest meditations, and the continual

tinual employment of my waking thoughts; it kindles the flame of devotion in my heart, and raises my soul upon the wings of gratitude to Thee the bountiful Author of every good and perfect gift.

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To excite in us the same pious sentiments, I shall endeavour, through the divine blessing, to set before you some of the precious instances of the divine goodness to us the children of men.

And here, how wide a field opens to our contemplation: Unnumbered beauties crowd upon the sight, and invite our meditations. What have we that we have not received? Supremely happy in the contemplation of his own most perfect essence, the Almighty from eternity enjoyed a felicity, independent on our existence. Influenced by thoughts of love alone, the Spirit of God at first made us, and the breath of the Almighty gave us life. His beneficent hand fashioned in the womb the curious structure of the body, clothed it with skin and flesh, fenced it with sinews and with bones, adjusted all its organs with an amazing propriety, and with

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admirable art adapted all its parts to the necessary functions of life.

Thus curiously formed, but of a make delicate and tender, we enter on the theatre of life weak and defenceless. Innumerable storms threaten our helpless infancy, alarming dangers assault our listless childhood and giddy youth, and crowd on every successive step of life. When reason, ripened by experience, has learned the proper sense of dangers, man looks back with astonishment and fear upon the formidable scene, and trembles still at the review. Amidst such alarming difficulties, the kind and merciful visitations of God, supported and sustained our spirits. His invisible hand formed the happy shelter, which warded off the rough unmerciful tempest. He paved the rugged and slippery paths of life, preserved our feet from falling, and our eyes from tears. He implanted in the breast the strong parental instinct, and taught it to guard and cherish with the intensest warmth, the helpless objects of its care, and to rise with the rising offspring to a different feeling, to friendship and kind affection; and

and where no parent's eye could reach, and human sagacity was ineffectual to foresee, or to prevent the danger, he gave his angels charge concerning us, he wrought deliverance from the impending ruin, and sent relief to the heart, while yet insensible of the important blessing.

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Let memory here engage in its most proper office, let it be faithful to its trust, it will suggest many such precious thoughts of God, and set before the attentive eye remarkable monuments of love distinguishing every period of life. The time perhaps was, when some violent distemper ravaged the powers of life, and threatened immediate dissolution: His goodness checked its impetuous progress, and brought us up from the gates of death. We may recall the time, when the loss of some beloved friend, torn from us by the un pitying hand of death, inflicted on the feeling heart the severest strokes of anguish, and overwhelmed the soul with floods of grief; when stooping beneath the heavy burden, his grace infused the oil of joy into the mourning spirit, raised up him that was bowed down, healed

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the broken heart, and, with a tender hand, bound up the painful wound. We may remember the period when our busy fears hurried us into regions of thickest darkness, impervious to the cheerful dawns of hope and joy, and raised the distant cloud fraught with thunders to break upon our head: His mercy sent the gladdening rays which dissipated the gloom that unreasonable fancy had formed, and expelled the phantoms which frowned upon our peace. Nor can we forget the time, when perhaps some favourite scheme, on the accomplishment of which, an erring imagination led us to rest our happiness, was blasted and overthrown: Reason's illuminated eye has since discovered that it was only the sport of idle hopes, the creature of a diseased mind; and the causes which operated its fall, though mortifying at the time, experience has found to be the ministers of divine love.

From the more singular demonstrations of goodness, let us turn our thoughts a little to the more ordinary, though equally important benefits of providence. That
life,

life, derived at first from the unsolicited and undeserved goodness of God, he continually supports by his unwearied bounty, and opens the liberal treasures of his love to supply the wants of his creatures. The air, so absolutely necessary for our preservation, if it were withdrawn for a moment, all flesh must perish together, and return to their original dust, he has amply provided and spread around the earth, and by his secret art constantly preserves the invisible fluid in its proper state, to supply the perpetual demands of respiration. In his treasures dwell the winds, which fulfil his beneficent pleasure; which mitigate and temper our sultry heats, relieve the oppressed spirits of men, purify the air, and chase away those noxious vapours which might corrupt the vital current of the blood. His exquisitely curious hand hath moulded this spacious globe of earth, fitted up the commodious dwelling, and diversified its surface with that agreeable variety which delights the eye, while it contributes to the utility and happiness of its inhabitants. He sendeth the refreshing springs

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which run among the valleys, he clothes our pastures with flocks, and covereth our fields with corn. His invifible arm guides with fteady care our revolving feafons, and raifeth the clouds which drop down fatnefs. He fends his fun to impregnate our earth, increafes and invigorates his rays to cherifh and mature the rifing blade, and crowns the fmiling year with plentiful tokens of his love. To his exuberant munificence we owe the happy viciffitude of day and night. His unfeen agency fhifts the varying fcene, leads the fun from the chambers of the eaft, and guides his circuit from one end of the heaven to the other, diffufing heat and light and life through the creation. He maketh darknefs; he draws the fhadows of the evening over the earth, and creates the f Silence of night, fo welcome to a wearied world. Beneath his all-fuf taining arm we lie down in peace, and take our quiet reft. He pours the gentle flumbers on the eyes of men, to repair the exhausted powers of nature, and while we fleep, his ever-wakeful eye is anxiously attentive to our fafety,

safety, his protecting presence encompasseth our bed, till the outgoings of the morning are made to rejoice over us.

But still higher objects claim our attention. How conspicuous appear the signatures of divine goodness on the human mind? He has put wisdom in the inward part, he has inspired us with reason, the brightest ornament of humanity, and implanted those invaluable powers and faculties which ennoble the heart. He leads to the ravishing discoveries of truth, pours down that supreme delight which the contemplation of divine perfection affords, and infuses that ineffable joy which accompanies the exertions of our faculties, when acting according to their nature, and directed to their proper objects. He communicated the noblest feelings to influence the breast. He inspired benevolence, which disdains every low ignoble fetter, and embraces the world with unaffected love. He warmed the heart with the love of glory, impelling it strenuously to vindicate the public good, and rousing every languid power to generous and worthy deeds. He gave the honest sense of shame,

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shame, to guard the interests of virtue in the breast. He softened the heart with tender sentiments, he instructed it to melt at the view of misery, to present the solicited relief, and he returns with heightened relish the joy which it communicates. He implanted the strong propensity to friendship and social intercourse, to link men by the most endearing ties, to allay the cares, and to enhance the joys of life.

But, above all, how swells the prospect, and how throbs the heart, when we open the sacred volume of revelation, and view the wondrous purposes of divine grace delineated in every page? Here we find our duty, the path to supreme felicity, clearly pointed out by the finger of God. Here the eye of natural reason, distorted and obscured by passions, is rectified and enlightened by the dictates of unerring truth; the deviating foot recalled from its wanderings; the dubious mind confirmed in virtue; and our love attracted by the most amiable and unspotted example. Here the despairing heart is cheered and relieved by the promise of the pardon of sin, and every honest virtuous endeavour
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animated and encouraged by the all-powerful aids of the Holy Spirit: And to invigorate every languid purpose, to fire the soul with the most generous ambition, the most sublime rewards are set before our eyes. The gloomy vale of death, once the dread of humanity, is brightened into the glorious avenue to an immortal life; a life where all the glories of the celestial paradise await our steady pursuit of virtue, and where no fears of death shall ever enter to disturb our joys.

To effectuate these beneficent ends, our merciful Father in heaven sent his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, to expiate our offences, to bear our sins in his own body on the cross, and by his merits to procure us admittance to those invaluable blessings forfeited by our apostasy. Hear O heavens! be astonished O earth! at this amazing prodigy of goodness, this profound abyss of redeeming love! its height and depth, its breadth and length, puzzle our search, and pass all understanding!

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What shall we render unto the Lord for his amazing benefits? shall we allow the most engaging tokens of his unwearyed goodness to pass before our eyes unregarded and unimproved, or gaze upon the noblest objects without feeling the emotions of gratitude and love? Deaf must be that ear indeed, which hears not the significant speech they utter. Gross must be that heart, and lost to every generous sentiment, which the unceasing bounty of our heavenly Benefactor cannot gain; and deservedly ought that tongue to cleave to the roof of the mouth, which is unwilling to utter the memory of his unequalled goodness, or backward to shew forth all his praise. Ingratitude is the crime which wears the deepest stain, which admits of no apology, and which is doomed to pollute that breast alone, whence every honest feeling is fled, and where every vestige of virtue is extinguished. Hence, the man who violates the regards due to the sacred names of friend and benefactor, the child who injures and revolts against a tender and affectionate parent, are not only hated and despised,

despised, but pointed at by the world as the objects of horror. But what benefactor so generous, what parent so tender, as our heavenly Father ! what earthly obligations can bind with cords like his ! Ingratitude to him, is a reproach to reason, and seems to be a stupidity unknown even to the brute creation. They can express by peculiar signs their sense of regard to their benefactor ; even the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib, and shall those whom God hath nourished and brought up as children, the people so highly favoured of heaven, the redeemed of the Lord, forget Him that is their Maker, and lightly esteem the Rock of their salvation ? While therefore, the blessings of heaven descend in plentiful effusions, while we sit every man under his vine, and under his fig-tree, let us not with ungrateful hearts disregard the secret operations of that kind hand, which decks it with the gaudy blossoms, and loads its branches with the precious fruits. Let the repeated gifts of God stir up our souls and all that is within us to bless him while we live ; and to ascribe glory, and honour,

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honour, and blessing, and praise, to the Father of mercies, who giveth us all things richly to enjoy.

Nor let our tribute rest in praise alone. The sudden fallies and rapturous transports of a heated fancy, transient as the morning cloud, and the early dew, which quickly pass away, are but too often mistaken for the real spirit of devotion and love. Our gratitude to God, if sincere, will discover its existence in the soul, by an uniform and regular tenor of virtuous obedience, by that conversation which adorneth the doctrine of our Saviour, by doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with our God. With this sacrifice of good affections, and a holy life, let us come before the Lord, and bow ourselves before the Most High God: the pious offering he will accept, the sacrifice of righteousness he will not despise.

To conclude, let the grateful experience of his love lay in our hearts the firm foundation of a steady confidence and trust in the goodness of his providence, and banish every gloomy suspicion about

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our future lot, dishonourable to God, and destructive of our peace. That generous hand, hitherto so active for our interest, is not shortened that it cannot save, nor the ear, formerly open to our cries, heavy that it cannot hear. Happy is that man, who hath the bountiful God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the Lord his God, who made the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein, who keepeth truth for ever, who executeth judgment for the oppressed, and giveth food to the hungry, who preserveth the strangers, who relieveth the fatherless and the widow, and who loveth the righteous.

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S E R M O N VII.

DUTY OF SHEWING A GOOD EXAMPLE.

MATT. V. 16.

*Let your light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in heaven.*

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THESE words are not to be considered as addressed to those alone who were appointed to minister in sacred things, and to be the spiritual guides of others, but do certainly extend to all in general who take upon themselves the character of the disciples and followers of the Son of God. Of all such persons this passage expressly requires, that, by a pious and honourable tenor of life, they study to recommend the doctrines and duties of religion,

in order that others, beholding their good works, may be led to glorify God, by being grateful to him for the illustrious discoveries of his grace, by acquiescing in that religion which gave so amiable a picture of his nature and service, and was able to produce such excellent effects, and by displaying its influence on their own conduct.

All I propose at present is to offer some arguments to enforce this important precept of our Saviour. Consider then, in the first place, that when a Christian lives in the habitual violation of the precepts of the Gospel, by such an inconsistency of conduct he does a material injury to the religion he professes. Here we are naturally led to make a melancholy reflection upon the narrow and imperfect influence which this best system, that ever made its appearance in the world, has been observed to exert upon the minds of many who profess submission to its laws. Among these characters, do we not often discern such features as it is extremely difficult to account for, and altogether impossible

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to reconcile to that system by which they pretend to be governed? How many even distinguish themselves by the most regular compliance with all its external institutions, by observing every form of godliness, but whose regularity does not arise from any serious regard to these appointments themselves, or to the authority of Him who hath established them, but merely from custom, from a decent conformity to the common habits of mankind, or what is far worse, from a desire perhaps to acquire a reputation for eminent sanctity; imagining, that having once established that point, you are bound to take the rest of their character upon trust, while, with daring presumption, they make use of such means as these to reach their own unrighteous ends;—those very ends which religion, and all its institutions, were expressly appointed to discourage and condemn.

Such an appearance is ready to startle the minds of good men; the wicked and unthinking part of the world immediately avail themselves of it, and scruple not

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to turn it to the disadvantage of Christianity itself: For the generality of mankind are totally incapable of making the necessary distinction between the abuse of principles, and their natural and genuine tendency. They seldom go farther than to what lies immediately before their eyes. Upon this they form their reasonings; from this they hastily and rashly draw their conclusions; and, in direct opposition to all the rules of right reason, they charge the corruptions of Christians upon that very religion by which these corruptions are condemned. Thus, in that conspicuous point of view in which their solemn professions have placed them, is it not to be lamented, that there have been many, who, instead of excelling others in virtue, have given occasion to the world to speak of them as evil-doers, and by exhibiting the most unjust representation of the fruits of their faith, have excited a prejudice against it within the hearts of men? How have they clothed their own impure vices with religion's comely attire! The enemies of Jesus have scoffed

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at the hateful image, and have aimed against it their keenest arrows: But alas! it is this divine religion itself which always feels and mourns under the wound!

Hence we are led to affirm, that a pious, virtuous, and exemplary life, is the unquestionable duty of all who are called Christians, and that this is absolutely no more than common truth and sincerity in those who profess the religion of Jesus. Truth and sincerity we most naturally approve of in all men; nay, we consider them as ingredients so essentially necessary in every sound character, that nothing in the world, no other quality whatever, can possibly excuse or make up for the want of them. They gain the applause of every mind: They well deserve that applause; for they are the most lovely qualities in the whole world, the first and most fundamental of all the virtues. But is there any thing in life that can discover the Christian professor to be possessed of those qualities, except a careful and conscientious adherence to these laws and principles, to whose government he pretends

tends to have submitted himself? or can it be alleged that we do him any sort of injustice, if we charge him with want of all principle; with a gross defect of sincerity; with downright dishonesty and dissingenuity of character, when his actions are evidently directed by the spirit of principles entirely opposite to those which he zealously declares he hath received, or when his general character bears no sort of resemblance to one which is formed upon the rules and maxims of Christianity?

Little, certainly, will it avail men to boast of their spiritual attainments, of their communion with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ, while they take to themselves an unpardonable licence to transgress the eternal rules of religion and morality. A professor of Christianity, and an habitual worker of unrighteousness; a disciple of Jesus, and one led captive by Satan at his will; these are characters which stand in direct opposition to each other, which no art, no reasoning, no sophistry, no deceit of argument, can possibly reconcile. What signi-

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fy the pretensions of men to the purest religion that ever existed, if it has no effect at all on the workings of the heart; if it extend no influence to heal the diseases of the soul; to calm, to regulate its passions; to produce real goodness and rectitude of conduct.

How much unfairness and deceit is here! May we not say, Act rather the honest part; assume at once thy real character; say thou art no friend to Jesus and his laws, and let not the holy vocation suffer any longer in its reputation by thy double dealing. Thy hypocritical professions can entitle thee to no part nor lot in those enlivening prospects, which Christianity gives to refresh the spirit of man in this wilderness of life. Thou hast never known what it is to be in Christ Jesus. Thou hast never felt the powers of the world to come. Shew me thy faith: That divine principle hath no existence with thee; for thou art not "delivered from the bonds of wickedness;" thou hast not "overcome this present evil world."

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In the next place, a pious and virtuous conversation, filled up with all the offices of practical religion, must be particularly obligatory upon all Christians, as it most effectually promotes the credit of this religion itself. And is this a circumstance which can be supposed trivial or indifferent, in the estimation of those who have any real value for this sublime system? When the Christian is observed to be totally consistent in his professions, and in his duty, and, to his piety and zeal for God, adds the practice of universal righteousness and charity, such a beautiful consistency of character cannot fail to carry much persuasion, into the hearts of men, of the power and efficacy of religion. Such an illustrious example has an efficacy, which is infinitely superior to all the imaginable powers of human language. This can at best only give a faint and feeble picture, while that exhibits real life and nature itself, making an irresistible appeal to sense, to observation, and experience, for the excellency and comeliness of religion. For beautiful, beyond expression, are the dictates of reli-

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gion, when transplanted into the characters, when delineated in the lives of its professors. Then, it is seen collecting its brightest glory, and its warmest beams, to reach their generous influence to every heart; and wherever this venerable form appears, it strikes a sacred awe and reverence, and excites universal love and imitation.

How amiable appears the servant of God, holy, harmless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The favourite of God, beloved by the good, revered by the wicked, he is raised, by his heavenly Father, to shine as a light in the world. Arrayed with unspotted innocence, the noblest garb of human nature, and adorned with the precious diadem of truth and integrity, he is shewn on earth, to make surrounding wickedness appear more ugly and deformed; to stop by his example its baneful influence; to make iniquity, as ashamed, hide its face. In him we behold a transcript of the Image of the eternal God himself, exhibited to men, to captivate a degenerated world; to call up all that is great and noble

noble within the human breast. In general we know, that to every virtuous, beneficent and useful character, there is due a very great share of reverence, esteem, and love. When we discover a man whose heart is possessed of the genuine feelings of piety, actuated by the most tender regards to his brethren, softened into the most delicate sensibility to their sorrows, and continually ready to express his compassion by the most substantial beneficence; when we observe his mind, entirely master of itself, ruled by the sober laws of reason and religion, fortified with that firmness and hardness of spirit which wraps it up and collects it within itself, erect and unbroken in adversity, and, in every calamitous scene, able to repose itself upon the mighty arm and gracious providence of God, we are naturally struck with the idea of greatness and magnanimity, and must be led to inquire what it is that can be able to form such an exalted character. Here the attention of men is naturally roused; and upon examining they become convinced, that it can be nothing else but
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the prevalent principles of that sublime system residing within the soul, and interwoven with the very frame of the heart. And, must not every well disposed mind be irresistibly led to fall in love with that religion, which is able to give such a dignity to human nature, and which is known to produce such precious effects?

Surely then, what we now urge upon you is very far from being a light or trifling matter. A pious, regular, and virtuous deportment stands recommended to your choice and practice, by arguments and motives the most weighty that can be addressed to the heart of man. If you have any sense of honesty of character; if you have any regard for the glory of God, and for the credit of this sacred system of religion; if you have any desire to promote the virtue, and consequently the happiness of the world around you; there is no other way of demonstrating the truth of those affections, but by performing those good and virtuous actions, which are most truly ornamental to human nature, and most highly honourable to the principles which produce

duce them. Are not the fruits of this religion most fair and comely? let them not be concealed. Are not its effects upon the heart and character most generous and divine? suffer it then to exert the efficacy of its own principles; allow it to display its genuine spirit. And if our conversation is such as becometh the Gospel of Christ, how much will this tend to fill the heart with the most complete measures of present peace and joy. Consider what a dignity the mind of man acquires, while it is conscious of carrying on the most valuable of all purposes, by spreading the glory of God in the world; by diffusing those beams of righteousness and truth, which soften and attract the hearts of men, and melt them down to the love of virtue. The best and most generous of all pleasures, are undoubtedly those of benevolence. There is a feeling of joy superior to all the descriptions of language, and to all the conceptions of the selfish mind, which immediately penetrates and ravishes the heart of the generous man, upon delivering his brother from present misery; but how infinitely higher

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higher must that feeling rise, if, by our instructions and pious example, we shall have been instrumental in recovering him to the love of virtue and the favour of his God, and in rescuing him from eternal misery; thus, studying, as far as our influence can reach, to render this earth a resemblance of the paradise above, and its inhabitants like to those celestial spirits, who burn with Divine love, and with the most ardent desires to fulfil the will of the Father.

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S E R M O N VIII.

ON REPENTANCE.

ISAIAH i. 16.

*Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of
your doings from before mine eyes, cease to
do evil, learn to do well.*

THE Prophet begins this chapter with heavy complaints of the vices and ingratitude of Judah. He goes on to describe the direful inflictions of divine wrath, as the punishment of that universal depravity which overspread the nation. But still, amidst all this general corruption, they were anxious to preserve the outward face of religion, and continued scrupulously attentive to every ritual and ceremonial

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cerimonial observance. The Prophet, therefore, proceeds to point out the vanity and insignificancy of such performances, and the extreme indignation of the Almighty at these external services, while they continued to be unaccompanied by real virtue.

In discoursing from these words, I propose, in the first place, to inquire into the nature of this duty, or to consider wherein that purification consists which God requires of us; in the second place, to suggest several arguments to urge this duty upon our practice.

To return to the first of these: This duty, then, must evidently imply a total and unreserved abstinence from every sinful gratification. When we look around us, or consider the present state of human nature, we observe, that a man, perfectly and completely vicious, is a character seldom or never to be found. There are some sins, to which our constitution or temper may but little incline us, and in which therefore we never indulge. But there is generally one particular iniquity, one leading passion, which forms the temper, which

which distinguishes the character, and which draws along with it others, that may be connected with it, or subservient to its views. Mankind are ever abundantly ready to acknowledge the malignity of those vices for which they feel no natural appetite, while every art is employed to conceal the favourite lust from the attention of the mind, or even to consecrate its form in the eye of conscience, and of God. But in spite of every argument which a corrupted mind may devise to justify its inward defilement, it is this tyrant of the soul, it is this plague of the heart, it is this reigning propensity, dear to us as a right hand, and as a right eye, which God particularly abhors, which calls for our deepest humiliation, and our most unfeigned tears.

But this duty must farther imply an uniform rectitude and sincerity of heart. The value of all religious obedience must evidently consist in the purity of those sources, which lie open to the eye of God alone. Hence, the laws of Jesus are formed with such peculiar delicacy and refinement, that they reach
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to the interior recesses of the breast, and check every rising lust, and every inward propensity of the mind to vice. Little, then, will it avail us that our hands are clean, if our hearts are not pure; that we purify the streams, while we neglect the source; or that our conduct is generally conformable to the rules of virtue, and marked by no flagrant iniquity, while we indulge a secret inclination to vice, and encourage a sinful propensity within the heart. In vain indeed do we assume the garb of holiness, the colourings of devotion, if within we are full of wounds and bruises, and putrifying sores.

Such a strong attachment to the form, accompanied by a total neglect of the power and feelings of godliness, is the vilest hypocrisy in the sight of God; and it is no wonder that the pure and candid and upright Spirit of the Holy Jesus, the Teacher of righteousness and truth, was always extremely shocked with a disposition which must appear peculiarly ugly and deformed to every well disposed mind, and that he attacked the character of the Pharisees, in which the features of that criminal

criminal spirit were deepest and strongest, with that becoming acrimony and honest severity which it deserved. It is represented as a spirit which corrupts the most pompous and specious services; which annihilates every pretension to piety and virtue; which bears an enmity to every grace; which tarnishes the lustre of the most shining qualities; and immediately destroys their title to all that dignity which they claim. It is emphatically called the Leaven of the Pharisees, which, wherever it enters into the composition of any mind, puffs up its vanity with the imaginary conceit of its own worth and importance, swells it with the ostentatious appearance of something great, and high, and venerable, to deceive the world, but which is found to be light and insignificant, odious and contemptible, in the sight of that God who weighs the merits of conduct in a nicer balance.

It was the design of God in all his dispensations to the world, to rear the principles of inward honesty; to form the heart of man, to sound, to solid, to substantial holiness! It was, however, the

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character of these men ; that, laying aside all regard to the spiritual service of God, they decked themselves with those artificial colourings alone, which form the most striking address to the senses and passions of men, and built the whole fabric of religion upon those ritual services, which are no farther valuable than as they conduce to promote the great ends of heartfelt piety. How odious hypocrisy must be to God, may be in some measure discovered, from that reception which dissimulation always meets with among men.

Prudence, in every station of life, is justly reckoned a most necessary qualification, and the indispensable handmaid of every virtue. Deceit, however, and cunning, are no parts of its composition, but a miserable abuse and perversion of that excellent quality. To a mind rightly disposed, there is no need of any arguments to expose the detestable nature of this vice. We need only to mention the constant variance of thoughts and words, the artful machinery of a fawning tongue to conceal the treacherous purposes of a wicked

wicked heart ; the most fordid and narrow views pursued, under the most specious appearances of a disinterested spirit ; and there immediately arises an image of the most shocking deformity, which every man, who is not lost to all sense of virtue, blushes to find clothed with an human form. Craft, deceit, and guile, will ever be considered as vices of the lowest and basest kind, and give an indication of a wicked and profligate heart ; an heart which, under the mask of virtuous principles, is capable of grasping every instrument of villainy that can reach its own little and selfish ends. Pleased with thus deceiving the world, the hypocrite may condemn the all-pervading eye of the Supreme Being. From his eye, however, no disguise can conceal ; for there is nothing covered, says our Saviour, that shall not be revealed, or secret, that shall not be made known. Fruitless, indeed, are all the efforts of fraud to screen its purposes, and to gain its ends. For a while they may impose upon the senses of men ; but the character is unnatural, and cannot be perpetually regular and uniform.

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It is often but a momentary deception, and times and seasons there are, in which the disguise will become so thin, as to allow the ugly features of the heart itself to appear. Mankind will begin to suspect; the suspicion will gradually increase; and, convinced at last of the cheat, they will universally condemn so worthless a spirit; nay, they will resent such an imposition, as the grossest injury and affront to their reason. Such is frequently the fate of the hypocrite in this life.

Or, should the dissembling and hypocritical character be supposed so extremely artful, and so singularly consistent, as to pass through life without suspicion, or even with universal applause, yet there is a day coming, which is fixed in the eternal records of Providence, to be the great rectifier of the opinions of men; the detector of every character; the grand revealer of the secrets of all hearts. Then shall hypocrisy be dragged from its darkest retreats, and stript of all its artificial colourings. Every mask shall then fall off, and that false heart, which, under the garb of virtue and goodness, received
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the esteem or admiration of men, shall be exhibited, in its true and real features, as the object of the contempt and scorn of all the rational creation of God.

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It may be sufficient now, barely to mention, in the last place, on this head, that the duty recommended in the text, includes in it, not only a general innocence of life, founded upon the sincerity and integrity of the heart, but likewise an earnest endeavour to abound in the acts of positive goodness. If our obedience shall terminate in departing from evil; if it ascend no higher, it is, indeed, deplorably lame and imperfect; nay, the evidence of its sincerity must remain extremely doubtful; for we must not only cease to do evil, but learn to do well.

We now proceed to the second general head of discourse, which was, to offer some arguments to excite us to the duty commanded in the text.

And, in the first place, let us consider the dreadful deformity, and malignant nature, of all sin in general. And nothing, surely, can be devised, more effectual for giving us the most striking views of this, than

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that stupenduous scheme, which was executed by the Divine grace, for the restoration and recovery of human nature! How dreadful an evil must that appear, which required so precious an atonement? How deep and fatal must be that stain, which nothing less than the blood of him who was the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person, could expunge or wash away? Who can hear the groans of an incarnated God, and not immediately feel the atrocious nature of vice? Who can pretend to love the Saviour, and caress these impure passions which formed the deepest agonies of his soul? Is not all iniquity to be considered as an outrageous insult upon all the perfections of the Deity? It is a defiance of that Almighty power, which is able to cast both soul and body into hell. It is a provocation of that unspotted purity, which holds in abhorrence every appearance of evil. It is a direct insurrection and mutiny against the dread Governor of nature; an assault formed to shake his throne; to wrest the sceptre of government from his awful hand; to trample under

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under foot that system of amiable laws, which are not the result of stern despotic authority, but established by eternal benevolence, to promote the order of his works, and to lead to the full perfection of the reasonable mind. It is an act of the most flagrant ingratitude to that unbounded goodness, which perpetually feeds and nourisheth our life. And what is the return which our most generous benefactor demands from us? It is surely no hard or expensive sacrifice. He calls on us only to put away that evil thing which his soul abhors; to loose the bonds of iniquity, and thereby to act up to the genuine principles of our nature, to consult the dignity of reason, and to study our own substantial happiness and welfare.

For, let us consider, in the second place, the miserable devastation which the pursuits of iniquity bring on the noblest powers and faculties of the mind. Vice must ever appear the deep and melancholy stain of our reason. While we accustom the soul to trace out the ignoble pursuits of sin, we teach it to grovel upon

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the earth, and lick the dust. Every vicious and infamous indulgence hath a natural tendency to erase the impressions of divinity from the soul of man; to damp its noble energy; to depress its exalted powers; to bend to earth that sacred and Divine form, which was intended, with an erect and majestic countenance, to contemplate and correspond with that heaven to which it stands allied. By admitting the power of vice into the heart, we introduce an unnatural interest, to spread a deplorable calamity over the mind, to overturn the wise subordination of its faculties, and to tear the peace and harmony of the soul. It inflames the passions, gives to them a savage power and influence, enables them to trample upon the native liberty of the mind, and to bring us into subjection to their heavy yoke. A deplorable darkness and obscurity is then spread over the eye of the spirit, the genuine dawns of reason are effectually intercepted, and instead of enjoying that glorious light which opens the extensive fields of knowledge to
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the understanding, the benighted soul is condemned to wander in the crooked paths of ignorance and error, to tread a region overcast with gloom, and follow out every deceitful form which ariseth to seduce its steps.

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We observe, in the third place, that the man who seeks for happiness by vicious pursuits, is destined to suffer perpetual disappointment. Where is the sensual pleasure, or earthly good, that ever answered the high raised expectations of the mind? The sinner contemplates at a distance, with inexpressible rapture, that gaudy phantom which his own imagination hath so exquisitely dressed, and feels no other wish but to enjoy it. But upon every approach he makes, it is sure to shift its place, and to evade his eager grasp; or when viewed more nearly, it no longer appears the same delightful object which once enchanted his heart. The colouring is coarse, the features are rude, and he concludes, that some distorted and irregular form hath been maliciously substituted in the room of that amiable figure which formerly captivated his soul.

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But, in the fourth place, let it be observed, that every vicious passion is most effectually calculated to disturb the peace and serenity of the mind. There is no peace, saith God, to the wicked. The vicious mind is reduced to an unnatural state, its faculties are disordered and subverted, and form a continual opposition, the law of the members warring against the law of the mind. The passions, withdrawn from the government of reason, and hurried on by the undiscerning impulse of sense alone, are engaged in a perpetual contention; and according to the increase of temptations, the desires and appetites are multiplied, and grasp at every appearance of good. Let us view the sinner's course of life, and nothing can appear so wild, so irregular, so unaccountable. The temptation is presented, the passions rise, eternity with all its weighty motives disappear; the desire is gratified, the appetites subside, sober reflection returns; conscience ascends its throne, and inflicts its punishment. To pacify its wrath, the virtuous resolution is formed;

formed ; the temptation again recurs, the heart is inflamed with the love of its favourite object ; a second gratification ensues, and conscience renews and hightens its wrath. Thus, torn by contending and contrary affections, the mind is like the troubled sea, whose waters cast up mire and dirt ; no settled peace can visit the polluted breast. The sinner's heart is allotted by Providence for the seat of that perpetual agony, which regularly succeeds the gratification of every unhallowed desire.

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That everlasting God, whose being and operations are acknowledged by the conceptions of the human heart, and who stands confest to the feelings of the mind, as living and reigning for ever to pour a signal vengeance on all the workers of iniquity, hath not left the purposes and designs of his government without a witness, but hath planted a faithful deputy and vicegerent within the breast, whose office it is, not only to point out the boundaries of right and wrong, but to confer a secret reward upon the pursuit of the one, and to inflict a direful punishment

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ment on the practice of the other. No affluence can bribe that trusty monitor, or silence his steady and impartial voice. No power can overaw or dismiss him. The most splendid character that ever ambition formed to dazzle the eyes of infatuated men, possesses no defence against the intrusions of this messenger of wrath. Through every obstacle he finds an easy access; insinuates himself into the vicious mind; shakes and rends the guilty heart; introduces terror and dejection into the haughtiest and stoutest spirit; and amidst every external appearance of happiness, renders it the residence of the most deplorable misery. Who can describe the weight of that trouble and anguish which prevail against the sinner? Who can count the number of these terrors which make him afraid on every side? The furious rebukes, the unmerciful lashes of an enraged conscience, wound and rack the heart, beyond all the imaginable power of human torture! They communicate an wound, which no earthly medicine can cure, or alleviate. No change of place, no alteration

ration of circumstances, can give the smallest ease. The guilty mind can never fly from itself. Let the sinner traverse the different climes of nature, in quest of ease and satisfaction, the detested phantom still pursues his steps; the terrors of the Lord depart not from his soul; the arrows of the Almighty stick fast within his heart. Let him attempt to drown every distracting care, by residing for ever in the mansions of noisy and unhallowed pleasures, yet shall guilt embitter every draught. Wherever he goes, in whatever situation he appears, he is destined to carry in his breast the worm which never dieth, that fire which is never quenched.

But farther, let it be observed, that the pursuits of vice are sure to destroy the health of the body, and to cut the thread of life. It is the appointment of the great Creator, that vice, or the excess of every passion, shall give a violent shock to the constitution, and prey upon the sources and springs of life. The present portion of sensual pleasure may be sweet in the mouth, but it is the gall of asps within:

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It is a deadly poison, which engenders the most fatal distempers, and corrupts the source of all our joys. He who by forced anticipations prevents the pleasant returns of natural appetite, must lose his relish for the most luxurious food, and contract that obstinate disgust, which no efforts of art can conquer; and at last, by indulging every pernicious demand of sense, he puts a speedy end to a miserable and insignificant life. He flies away as a dream, and cannot be found; yea, he is chased away as a vision of the night. His bones are full of the sins of his youth. He dieth in the bitterness of his soul; the number of his months is cut off in the midst.

Such are some of those natural miseries which God hath established, as the necessary fruits of sin. Happy were it for the sinner, did they reach no farther: But we may now observe, in the last place, that the miseries of the transgressor extends beyond the grave. The end of these things is death. That is a perpetual banishment from the blissful presence of God; and everlasting stores of misery and
wrath

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wrath are reserved for his devoted head. He shall be condemned to the deep and awful misery, where sad repentance and severe reflection shall at last approach to take possession of the soul; not however as a friend, to sooth its agonies, and mitigate its sorrows, but as a serpent, to fasten upon the heart, to gnaw, and to devour its peace for ever. Let all the earth tremble at the dreadful thought. Consider this, ye that forget God. Who knows the power of his wrath? Who can tell the thunders of that vengeance with which Omnipotence is armed? Stand still, therefore, for a little, O sinner. Restrain thy fond and giddy course, let not an eternal interest be for ever ruined by perpetual inattention. Listen to serious thought and reflection, while it addresseth thee in the endearing strains of a faithful friend, which feels for thy miseries, and would correct thy errors, before it approach with the frown of an incensed and implacable avenger. Fly from sin as from the face of a serpent; if thou come near it, it will surely bite thee. The teeth thereof

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thereof are as the teeth of a lion, slaying the souls of men. All iniquity is as a two edged sword, the wounds whereof cannot be healed.

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S E R M O N IX.

ON DEATH.

2 TIM. iv. 6, 7, 8.

For I am now ready to be offered, &c.

THE great Apostle of the Gentiles, after having undergone many labours in the service of his Master, was put in prison, and tried for his life at Rome. It was immediately after this, that he composed the Second Epistle to Timothy, in which he gives hints of his approaching sufferings, and of the danger to which he was exposed in the course of the following year. In the preceding part of this Epistle, we find him exhorting

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Timothy to be faithful and vigilant in every part of his office, without suffering himself to be in the least disturbed by the thoughts of his adversity, his danger, or his death; assuring him, that he looked forward to his own dissolution, not only without emotion, but with a secret tranquillity and triumph, animated by the testimony of a good conscience, and by the prospect of that high reward reserved for him at the time of Christ's appearance to judge the world.

All that I propose at present, is to make some observations on the several particulars contained in the text, in the order in which they lie before us. We begin, then, with making some observations on the sources of that consolation which supported this eminent servant of God, at the time when his departure was at hand. It was the reflection upon a well spent life; it was the consciousness of a strenuous and immoveable fidelity in the religious warfare, which formed his habitual preparation for death, and laid the foundation of his joyful hopes. It is appointed for all men once to die; but when

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or where this event shall overtake us, the most sagacious are unable to calculate. A thick veil is drawn over futurity; and this, though of all events to us the most interesting, is covered with impenetrable darkness. It is appointed to dwell in secrecy, that we may for ever watch to provide and fortify the mind against its approach; that we may keep the holy lamps of every divine grace burning with a pure and uninterrupted flame. We cannot surely reflect upon this truth, without deploring the infatuation, the madness of the sons of men. How many live utterly unmindful of the uncertain tenor by which they hold their breath, and pursue the vanities or the vices of life, with as complete security as if the Almighty had declared, with an audible voice from heaven, that they should never die. They enjoy the present, they grasp the future, without one thought of the many secret arts by which death steals upon the unwary mind, and levels every vicious hope. How often, amidst the most pleasing dreams, does some latent distemper ridicule the fantastic schemes of man, or some

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unexpected accident touch the springs of life: then farewell to all his greatness, to all his magnificent designs!

We cannot surely conceive any thing more deplorable, or an object of deeper and more deserved pity, than the state of the careless and impenitent sinner. We naturally shudder and tremble for that unhappy man, who ventures to walk blindfold along the narrow summit of a steep precipice, where one false step shall bring him down at once, and tear, and crush, and crumble him to dust. A picture this of the infinitely more deplorable danger of the guilty man, whose passions have extinguished his sight, his thought, his reflection. Insensible of the hazard which he runs, of the false and deceitful ground on which he walks, he treads the path of life with ample confidence, till the unexpected hour arrives, when his feet are made to stumble upon the dark mountains, when the shadows of an everlasting night are drawn over his eyes; when death hurries him into the presence of his Judge, and places him before that dread tribunal, whose decisions must overwhelm his soul

foul with an eternal flood of unavailing
 sorrow; or should it be his fate to lan- SERM.
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 guish upon a death-bed, then will he find
 his boasted remedy against the fears of
 dissolution deplorably unsuccessful and fa-
 lacious.

The plan on which he hath acted
 through life is beautifully described in
 the language of ancient wisdom. "Life is
 " short and tedious; and in the death of a
 " man there is no remedy. Come on, there-
 " fore, let us enjoy the good things that
 " are present; let us speedily use the crea-
 " ture like as in youth; let us fill ourselves
 " with costly wine and ointment; let no
 " flower of the spring pass by us; let us
 " crown ourselves with rose-buds before
 " they be withered; let none of us go with-
 " out his part of voluptuousness; for this is
 " our portion, and our lot is this." But in
 spite of every artifice to keep at a distance
 the melancholy thought, death must come;
 and if it does overtake the mind thus ut-
 terly unprovided against it, with what
 racks and tortures must it be attended.
 " O death, how bitter is the remembrance
 " of thee to the man that hath lived at rest

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“ in his possession, and hath had nothing to vex him?” Who can describe the weight of that trouble and anguish which then prevail against him; who can count the number; who can tell the force of those arrows of the Lord, the poison whereof drinketh up his spirit? Conscience, whose voice had been so long drowned amidst the hurry of passions, now arrayed in tremendous majesty, awakes for the interest of God, and unfolds the scenes of impurity and vice. Painful and distressing remembrance, but upon which he is now condemned to dwell. To what quarter can he turn his eye for relief? If he look back on his past life; if he look within his own breast; if he look forward to the vast unmeasured ocean of eternity, which now lies open to his view, every prospect contains horror to oppress and overwhelm him.

Then must he give place to such just upbraidings of his mind as these. Did the eternal source of life and wisdom light up his candle in my breast, and inspire me with understanding, for no higher purpose but that I might for a little gaze
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around me with unmeaning eye, taste every cup of pleasure which appetite presents, pursue every rising vanity that mocks the sight; and then mingle with the clay on which I tread? No! Now the enchantment is dispelled, the charm is broken: Now I am sadly convinced that an higher destiny is given to man; that eternity is his home; that its joys are his portion; that religion is his education for that higher house, the instruction by which he must be prepared for a suitable appearance in the august presence of his heavenly Father. But how shall I appear in that presence; I who have neglected every part of that divine science; who have done despite to the Spirit of God, and thereby treasured up unto myself wrath against the day of wrath, and revelation of the righteous judgment of God? I have indeed had some few flashes of transient and feverish joy in my youth: I have walked in the ways of my heart, and in the sight of my eyes; but how dreadful the reflection, that for all these things God will immediately bring me into judgment? When, therefore, I look

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forward to that eternity I am just about to enter, there I see nothing but the hand of God lifted up against me, and ready to sheath the sword of justice in my guilty breast. For me there remaineth nothing but a fearful looking for of judgment, and revelation of wrath against all iniquity, and ungodliness of men.

Thus doth conscience thunder in his ears his tremendous doom, and anticipate the pangs of everlasting vengeance. How earnestly doth he now wish that he could recal his mispent time. Thousands of rams, ten thousands of rivers of oil, would he now give to bribe the tyrant for one moment's respite; but death is inexorable, and obstinately pursues his fatal purpose. The terrors of the Lord take hold on him as water: He dieth in the bitterness of his soul: A tempest stealeth him away in the night; a storm hurls him out of his place: He is driven from light into darkness, and hissed out of the world: He hath no name in the streets, and his remembrance perissheth from the earth. Such is the portion of a wicked man, and this the heritage appointed him by God.

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The only sovereign and efficacious remedy against the fears of dissolution, is to mortify the power of sin within the soul, and to make all our vicious appetites to die before us; for the sting of death is sin. He that hath risen above the influence of sin, can live beyond all possibility of any great annoyance from the terrors of the last enemy. He preserves his loins girded about with fortitude and courage against his most secret or unexpected approach, and can look forward to that period which shall terminate his present existence, not only without disturbance, but with a secret complacency. Thus he enjoys life itself with the proper relish; looks abroad upon all the objects of this world with satisfaction and approbation; sees no real faults amidst the works of a wise and almighty hand; and, so far from viewing death as an error or imperfection in the plan of Providence, he regards it as a natural and unavoidable event, and rejoices in that supreme wisdom which hath devised it, as the security from present cares and misery, as the path to

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to lead to God himself, as the avenue to an endless and immortal life.

And how glorious a thing must it be to have accomplished all the great purposes of life before we come to die ! How divine and animating a scene is the death-bed of the righteous man ! what can disturb his last and peaceful moments ? The recollection of his trials and patience, the many acts of piety and benevolence which his memory can then suggest, all rise to view, to refresh his retiring soul, to smile upon his departing spirit, and render it superior to the frowns of death, which he is thus enabled to consider, not as a stern and inexorable tyrant, sent to execute the vengeance of Heaven ; but as the messenger of love and peace, commissioned to close a troublesome and mortal life, and to put him in possession of one glorious and eternal. Faithful through life to God and to his duty, and unremitting in his attention to form himself upon the sacred pattern of his Redeemer ; he is ready to cry out, like good Simeon of old, with a degree of holy impatience, “ Lord, now
“ let thy servant depart in peace, for mine
“ eyes

“ eyes have seen thy salvation !” Con- SERM.
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scious indeed he is; that in many things he hath offended and come short of the glory of God ; but how doth his soul magnify the Lord, and his spirit rejoice in God his Saviour, who hath opened a fountain to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and uncleanness. Hence he is enabled to indulge the humble hope of the forgiveness of his sins, of the friendship of his Creator, and of those most gracious smiles, with which he will eternally rejoice the hearts of all his children. He goes to inherit the treasures, collected upon earth with exquisite delight, and sent before him to heaven. There, he knows, the righteous live for evermore. Their reward is with the Lord, and the care of them with the Most High. They receive a glorious kingdom, and a beautiful crown from the hand of the Lord.

From the manner in which the Apostle expresses the foundation of his tranquillity and hopes, we may observe, in the second place, what is the nature of that service in which the Christian is engaged, and of that

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that strenuous and immoveable fidelity which is indispensably requisite to complete his character: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith."

It is the uniform declaration of the Almighty to all the sons of men, that it is no easy thing to be a Christian, but that through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. There is indeed no secret or unaccountable charm capable of wafting the souls of men to heaven. It is the great law of Divine Providence, that nothing great shall be given to man without toil and labour. Infamy and disgrace pursue the indolent; honours, and wealth, and renown, attend the brave, the hardy, the enterprising spirit. Who ever prospered in his earthly schemes by faint and languid endeavours alone? To what severities must he submit, who strives to rise the terror of the mighty, and to transmit the memory of his conquests to adorn the historical volume? Through what a train of drudgery must he pass, who would penetrate into all the depths of human learning? he gives

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gives no sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eye-lids; he must sit up late, and rise early, and eat the bread of sorrow. To what hardships must he submit, whose heart is inflamed with the lust of money, and obstinately set on amassing the treasures of this life? The very same order is observed in the scheme of divine grace; and he that would reach the joy that is set before him, must endure hardships, and must take up his cross. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent must take it by force. The noble prize shall never be bestowed upon the indolent spirit, but is to be earned only by hard and laborious efforts. Thus the life of a Christian is often represented in Scripture by the image of a warfare.

Our great enemy is well acquainted with man, and with what is in man. Often does he make his approaches with much secrecy and deep laid guile, and insinuate himself silently and unperceived. He fastens upon our different propensities, touches the ruling passions, the darling objects of the mind, and kindles such desires as lead to disaffection to the sacred cause

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cause of God and virtue. We wrestle not with flesh and blood, but with principalities and powers, with the rulers of the darkness of this world, with spiritual wickedness in high places. Our combat does not endure only for a little, nor is our security the reward of a few hours of steady opposition, but almost every step we take through the wilderness of life exposes us to some new attack: we are often assaulted by all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and through the whole of life we maintain an unceasing struggle. Nor are all our enemies open and declared. Equally dangerous are our secret foes, these insidious passions which lodge within us, ever ready to catch at the bribes of an alluring world, and to open for it a secret passage to the heart. Aided by all this inward corruption, what a threatening aspect must this world wear to the interest of virtue? When we survey the state of it, we find it filled with a variety of corrupt examples; and what formidable enemies are these? and what an amazing influence have they to seduce us from the paths of virtue?

Thus

Thus surrounded with dangers on every hand, how absolutely necessary is it to be strong, to quit ourselves like men, to brace the mind with firmness and vigour, to keep the attention constantly directed to every quarter from which we may be assaulted? No duty can be more requisite for those who have foes to struggle with, of irreconcilable enmity, and of amazing vigour. Did the governor of some important fortress, who knew that it was besieged by enemies obstinately determined to take the place; who knew, at the same time, that it could not be taken but at the expence of his own life; did he, notwithstanding of all this, leave a passage open, and resign himself to dissipation and amusement; would not all the world justly hold him mad? But with what superior reason may we be accounted so, who are entrusted with the important fortresses of the heart; who know that it is beset with enemies who employ every art to undermine or assault it; who know, at the same time, that an eternal interest depends upon its defence, if we shall be found so deplorably remiss as seldom to think of this,

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or at least to allow the thought to form the smallest part of our anxiety or concern? In general, as sincerity is the root and essence of all piety, so steadiness and perseverance is the test, the glory, the crown of virtue: He that endureth unto the end, the same also shall be saved: To him only that overcometh, will Christ grant to sit down with him on his throne, even as he also overcame, and hath sat down on the throne of his Father.

To fight the good fight, to keep the faith amidst all the violence of opposition, is indeed a work by far too arduous to be performed by our own natural and unassisted powers. Thanks be to God, however, we are not left to struggle alone: There is an omnipotent grace which gives strength to the feeble. Such an assistance, however, does by no means supersede the necessity of our natural endeavours; on the contrary, it implies the compliance of our wills, and the co-operation of our most hearty efforts. The law of the Christian dispensation is this: We are commanded to labour with as vigorous efforts as if the whole success
of

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of that work depended on ourselves alone; and, at the same time, with the humility and diffidence of a mind conscious of its own imbecility, and sensible of the necessity of Divine Grace to render all its endeavours effectual. The man who is thus disposed has no reason to dread the greatest dangers: "He who is with thee is greater than he who is against thee: The Lord is thy life and thy salvation; whom shalt thou fear? The Lord is the strength of thy life; of whom shalt thou be afraid?" The sacred influence of his grace shall continually descend, to guide thy doubtful steps; to invigorate every languid effort; to teach thy hands to war and thy fingers to fight; and to crown thee with final success and triumph. Which leads us naturally to turn our thoughts, in the third place, to that blessed and glorious reward, specified in the text, by the expression of a crown of righteousness.

This expression has an evident allusion to those crowns bestowed by the ancients on brave and intrepid warriors; to those marks of honour and respect by

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which

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which they were wont to distinguish particular feats of valour. It intimates to us; that high and splendid triumph which shall be at last conferred on the faithful and undaunted servants of the Most High God; that ineffable dignity which shall be bestowed on them in the day of Christ's appearance; and recalls to our thoughts that most interesting period, when the Judge of all the earth shall descend, with ineffable pomp and majesty, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God. Thousands of thousands shall then minister unto him; ten thousand times ten thousand shall stand before him, while the judgment is set, and the books are opened. All that are in their graves shall then hear the voice of the Son of Man, and shall come forth; they that have done good to the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil to the resurrection of damnation; before his dread tribunal shall be solemnly convened all the different generations of men, all that ever lived, or do live, or shall live upon the face of this earth, to receive the due reward of their different deeds.

And

And now the Archangel lifts his awful hand, and swears by him that sitteth upon the throne, that time shall be no more. Thunders instantly rend the air; horrible convulsions rock the earth; the destroying fires begin their dreadful ravages; and all this ample scene ascends in one general and unrelenting blaze. The mountains and islands are moved out of their places; the earth flies away; the heavens depart, as a scroll when it is rolled together. How happy that man, who shall then be able to behold the universal wreck of nature, and to hear the sound of the last trumpet, without the racking anticipations of guilt; who shall rise with rapture to receive his Judge and Saviour, as one who comes to realize his best hopes; to crown him with that joy which is unspeakable and full of glory. The man who hath bravely fought the good fight of faith; who hath finished his course with honour, shall then see that his labour was not lost; but shall find his temples surrounded with laurels of unfading glory. With songs, with everlasting joy on his head; with vice, iniquity,

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and every corrupt passion bound in chains, to adorn his triumphal chariot, he shall be conducted, in solemn pomp and majesty, to Zion, the abode of everlasting happiness, there to dwell for ever in the presence of God, and to inquire through eternity into the beauties of the heavenly Jerusalem. How great, O God, is that goodness which thou hast laid up for them that serve thee, and wrought for them that fear thy name before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them for ever in the secret of thy pavilion; thou shalt defend them from the strife of tongues, and from the pride of men. Such honour shall all the saints of God possess; such shall be the reward of the steady friends of Jesus. Thus blessed shall they be who are found holy and undefiled in the world; they shall have a right to the tree of life; they shall enter through the gate into the city, and reign with Jesus for ever and ever.

Our last observation is founded on the declaration in the text, that this honour shall be conferred on those, and those alone, who love the appearance of Jesus. A declaration which determines exactly the

the character of those who shall be accounted the worthy subjects of the Divine munificence. None, most assuredly, can be said to love the appearing of Jesus, but they who are pure and holy, and who, full of the consciousness of piety, are qualified to rejoice when the season of their complete redemption draweth nigh. Almighty God hath made it an indispensable condition of our attaining this precious felicity, that we do in truth and reality possess this most important qualification. Shall the treasures of Divine grace ever be prostituted to enrich the unworthy? or, shall the impious man ever be raised to that happiness which he hath always despised? No, the decree hath passed, a decree which shall never be reversed, that unless we are renewed in the spirit of our minds, we cannot enter into the kingdom of heaven.

This decree is no arbitrary law; it is founded in nature; it is implied in the very reason of things, that none but the pure in heart are qualified for relishing the pleasures of that immortal inheritance. For, what is heaven? Not a total

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alteration of state, but reason, and every pious and virtuous disposition, dilated and expanded to its highest pitch. What are the immortal joys which it contains, but the security, the increase, and the perfection of virtue? Could we suppose the habitual and impenitent sinner admitted into heaven; there he would immediately find himself completely wretched and miserable. For where, amidst all the numerous glories of the new Jerusalem, could he find one single beauty to strike his corrupt eye? Where, amidst the fountains of pleasure, which flow fast by the throne of God, could he expect one single drop to please his vitiated palate? It is the seeds of grace alone sown on earth, and protected and reared amidst all the storms of temptation, that can receive the ripening influences of the Sun of Glory. "Be not therefore deceived, God is not mocked. Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. He that soweth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap corruption; and he that soweth to the spirit, shall of the spirit reap life everlasting."

S E R-

SERMON X.

ON SOLICITUDE.

I PETER V. 7.

*Casting all your care upon him, for he careth
for you.*

MAN is a being of a compound nature, made up of soul and body. To accomplish the happiness of such a being, it is necessary that both of these should be free from trouble and disquietude. We are all sensible of the influence which the disorders of the body have upon the peace of the mind; but we know likewise, that the happiness or misery of the man depends more upon

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the situation of the mind itself than any other cause. The calm undaunted spirit of a man may sustain his bodily infirmity, but an wounded, a ruffled, a pish and murmuring spirit, who can bear? This must infallibly poison all the sources of happiness, and establish the foundation of perpetual misery within the soul. It is therefore the great aim of Religion, which means nothing by all its precepts, but to make us completely blessed, to point out the most amiable views of the character of God, and to inculcate the exercise of perpetual hope, and trust in his most beneficent providence, as the only effectual instrument of our present felicity; because this alone, is capable of composing the mind into peace and rest; and filling it with cheerfulness, amidst all the vexations which distress and overwhelm the spirits of others.

Of this nature is the precept before us; which I shall, in the first place, very briefly explain; and, in the second place, enforce upon your practice by several arguments.

Such

Such precepts of religion cannot be supposed to inculcate an entire negligence, or a total inattention, to our external situation in life. Religion expressly forbids us to be slothful in business. It calls us to action; it commands us to avail ourselves carefully of all those means, which Providence points out for securing a competent share of the good things of this life, and to exercise a prudent foresight to defend ourselves from the evils of it. The disposition which it condemns, is that criminal solicitude about our worldly interests; that degree of care, which is full of anxiety; of fears and doubts, and distrust; which, consequently, must disturb the peace of the mind, and render it restless, impatient, and dissatisfied. The meaning of the text, then, may be thus expressed: Let not your anxiety about the most necessary concerns of life distract your minds, or loosen your constant dependence upon God, and your submission to his will. Having contributed your necessary endeavours, be not disquieted about the success of them; but, with a peaceful composure

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posure and serenity of mind, resign every event to the superintendence and determination of that God, who is concerned for your good, and careth for all your interests.

We now proceed to offer some arguments to enforce this precept, and to urge upon you this happy temper of mind.

In the first place, then, let it be considered, that all immoderate care is highly criminal, and impious in its nature.

How is it possible, that a mind of such an anxious and discontented turn can possess any sort of claim to real piety? Does it not discover the heart to be altogether void of those impressions of God, of his nature and designs, which are the very first principles in all religion. It strips him at once of the honour of all his best perfections; because it implies a secret persuasion, that there is a deficiency of wisdom and goodness in the Supreme Mind, which supports and governs the operations of nature: An apprehension, which, as it is the most gross and injurious in itself, so it must receive its proper

per and suitable punishment, by entailing the heaviest misery upon that mind which hath felt any part of its influence. For, what misery can be equal to the apprehension of being condemned to live under the government of one, who is indeed Omnipotent, but who is conceived to be destitute of that skill and goodness, which alone can be the foundation of trust and confidence in his administration? Horrors and wild alarms must be the perpetual portion of such a soul. It must for ever remain destitute of those consolations which support the pious in every moment of their pilgrimage, and who can delight themselves in the contemplation of that exuberant goodness of God, which warrants all the exertions of his Almighty arm, and who are confident that it is never stretched forth, but for the best and most benevolent purposes.

Wherever, indeed, we turn our eyes around us, and contemplate the creation of God, we are presented with the view of a world adorned with various beauties; but where no unmeaning or unnecessary ornaments

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ments are displayed ; where every object is evidently intended to communicate some degree of happiness and pleasure. That agreeable variety with which the world is diversified, contributes, at the same time, to the utility and comfort of its inhabitants. In no part of his great creation, hath God left himself without a witness of his mercy and love. The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. The bounty of the Creator is scattered through all his works with a liberal hand. Even the lowest tribes of animals, the most inconsiderable parts of his workmanship, feel his generous influence. He openeth his hand, and they are filled with good. It is the want of proper attention to this extensive goodness of God, and unreasonable impressions of the Deity, which our Saviour points out as the great foundation of this immoderate anxiety *. Weak, he justly argues, must be that faith, and little must that mind have learned of the nature of its Creator, which can observe that he dispenses his bounty in such abundance

* Matth. chap. vi. from verse 26.

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dance through all the works of his hands, and still entertain the secret thought, that his love is exhausted on the minutest objects, and that there is nothing in reserve for the sons of men. The suspicion is highly injurious to the God of nature. Those, undoubtedly, whom he hath dignified with his own Image; who possess the most exalted station among his works; and who approach the nearest to his own nature, he hath chosen as the objects of his tenderest regards, and as the peculiar charge of his watchful providence.

In the second place, all inordinate care about the events of life, is offering an affront to that love and goodness which we have formerly experienced, and deeply partakes of the nature of ingratitude to God.

The generous friend, who, upon former occasions, hath given us the most unquestionable proofs of his love, would reasonably be offended, should we indulge any suspicion of his good will, or doubt the continuance of his attachment to our interest. Let us then attend to the various
and

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and substantial tokens of the goodness of our God, which have followed us through the former part of our lives. Hath he not hitherto been our shepherd and our guide, and appointed his rod and staff to be the friendly companions of every successive step of our path. Reflect upon the days that are past; consult thy memory, and it will furnish thee with the singular monuments of divine love distinguishing the various periods of life. When perhaps surrounded by imminent danger, and ready to be crushed by some impending stroke, and destitute of a friendly arm to work deliverance, God sent thee salvation from his holy hill, and brought thee up from the gates of death: He took thee from the horrible pit, and from the miry clay, and established thy feet upon a rock; putting a new song into thy mouth, even praise to thy God. When perhaps tormented with the uneasy fears of some great distant evil, his mercy sent those cheerful rays, which dissipated the gloom that unreasonable fancy had formed, and expelled the terrors which frowned upon thy

thy peace. Art thou then the child of such amazing love, so highly favoured of God, and canst thou doubt his future mercy, or question that remarkable bounty which hath been hitherto so liberally poured into thy cup!

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The ungrateful thought, while it destroys thy peace, is highly dishonourable to thy God, and may provoke him to withdraw the exercises of his mercy.

Such was the crime of the Israelites in the wilderness: "They were a generation whose spirit was not stedfast with God. Marvellous things did he in their sight. He led them in the day-time with a cloud, and all the night with a light of fire. He smote the rock, and the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. Yet they spake against God. They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Can he give bread? Can he provide flesh for his people? Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth; a fire was kindled against Jacob, and anger also came up against Israel. Because they believed

"not

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“not in God, because they trusted not in
“his salvation.”

In the third place, A peevish, an anxious, a discontented temper of mind, must prove a source of misery, must subject the soul to perpetual uneasiness and pain in all the situations of life.

A person of this cast of mind can never enjoy any happiness. How can we conceive a more deplorable object, than the man who is continually racked and torn by fretfulness and care? To him the whole face of nature wears a dark and melancholy aspect, and every thing that is called pleasure is sour and unpalatable. He is blind to every comfortable circumstance that may enter into his lot. His imagination ever dwells upon some disagreeable point; and it is not in the power of all the enjoyments of this world to give it any sort of solace. Thus his mind cleaves to pain, acquires a certain bias and tendency to misery, contracts a settled melancholy gloom, by which it is entirely incapacitated for relishing any of those generous blessings which may enter into his present condition. “There is,”
says

says Solomon, "a vanity under the sun," SERM.
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"and it is a sore evil; the man to whom

"God hath given riches and wealth, so
"that he wanteth nothing of all that his
"soul desireth, yet God giveth him not
"the power to eat thereof." Or, should
we suppose him to find no bad circum-
stance, in any present situation, on which
to vent the spleen of his heart, yet the pee-
vish and distrustful person is amazingly in-
genious in his conjectures, and is perpetu-
ally discovering something or other before
him, whose disagreeable frown corrupts
the relish of every thing that is present.
With what an artful and pernicious cu-
riosity doth he look forward, and contrive
the scenes of some future calamity, which
shall one day overtake and oppress him.
Unhappy man! little doth he consider that
his fears, with respect to all the objects of
this present life, are often without foun-
dation. Can he draw aside the veil which
covers the secrets of futurity? Is he abso-
lutely certain, that the evil which he
dreads shall ever befall him? and if it
doth not happen, what a foolish part hath

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he acted, by feeling it already in all its severity, by laying upon himself a burden which was never allotted him by Providence, and giving a reality, in his imagination, to a scene of distress which hath no existence.

In the fourth place: All such peevish care is utterly unprofitable and impotent, and totally incapable of ever accomplishing its end.

Is not the direction of all events in the hand of God, which is steady, irresistible, and full of power to execute all his will? Are there any of its operations so slightly adjusted, as to be set aside by the feeble breath of peevish discontent? The arm of God is uncontrollable, it urgeth on its purposes in a firm and steady course, and must, in spite of all our efforts, carry us and all created things along with it. The stream of Providence perpetually rolls on with an impetuous current; and he who ventures to oppose it, shall only fatigue himself, and waste his strength and spirits in vain.

The peevish and rebellious spirit, then, is like the man who is drawn forward by

a mighty hand ; he struggles, and strains all his powers, to go in the opposite course, but must obey its impulse, in spite of all his reluctance, which only serves to render him the more wretched and unhappy.—

The truth is, the only sovereign remedy against all the fears of the mind, and the only infallible method of acquiring an undisturbed confidence, is, by the pursuit of holiness and virtue, to connect ourselves with that great Being who is the sole disposer of all events. If this connection is once established, the happiness of the mind is for ever secured ; nor is there any thing in life that can break its peace, that can shake this divine hope, or unsettle this steady anchor of the soul : “ All things are yours,” says the Apostle Paul, “ whether the world, or life, or death, or things present, or things to come ; all are yours, and ye are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.”

On real piety, then, as on a solid rock, let us lay the foundation of tranquillity and peace. It is the object of the unchangeable delight of God ; and what he

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delights in must be secure from real evil ; must partake of all his munificence and favour. Possessed of this most valuable quality, we may rest assured that God careth for us. And where can the most anxious, the most interested heart, wish for greater security, in all its most important concerns, than it can find under the tuition of Almighty love ? Amidst the various revolutions which may take place in this inconstant scene of things, we may cheerfully resign to Him the disposal of our lot. I am ignorant of what to-morrow may bring forth : Futurity is veiled in darkness, and the events which it conceals are known to Supreme Intelligence alone. But, calm and unruffled, I can expect the opening of that scene ; and, while I know the Mind that devised, and the Power that controuls all the occurrences of life, I can with pleasure welcome every appointment.

Upon the whole, let our hopes and fears, which are the great springs of human conduct, acquire a right direction, and learn to point to their proper objects. Instead

stead of coveting those lying vanities which this world holds forth, let us be earnest to possess the favour of God, which is better than life and all its enjoyments ; and, instead of being alarmed with the frowns or imaginary terrors of this perishing world, let our great attention be directed to shun those vicious courses which will expose us to his present and everlasting displeasure. To withdraw ourselves from the pursuits of holiness and virtue, and consequently from the favour and protection of Heaven, let us consider as the very consummation of misery ; and happy alone let us reckon ourselves, when, full of the consciousness of virtue, we are qualified to surrender, with perfect security, our most valuable interest to the direction of Omnipotent Wisdom. The heart that is thus formed, looks around upon nature and this world with a smile of complacency. No blackness or darkness throws a veil over the objects of life, but all is gilded with the cheerful rays of light. Here, the anxieties, fears, and disquietudes, which often spread a gloom

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over the gaiety of the most prosperous life, do immediately disappear, and ease, serenity, and consolation, become the constant companions of the most calamitous fortune. "O taste then and see that God "is good; blessed is the man that trusteth in him."

SER-

ON DEVOTION.

PSALMS lxxxiv. 4.

*Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; they
will be still praising thee.*

THIS Psalm was composed by David, in those seasons of darkness and distress, when he fled before the face of Saul, when he was an exile from his country, deprived of access to the tabernacle of God, and obliged to wander about in deserts, without any certain habitation. In this situation he became a prey to many severe calamities; he felt all the variety of misery and woe. The unhappy

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state of his native country, shaken by intestine commotions, and the apprehension of those alarming dangers which perpetually surrounded himself, were objects which must have severely affected his mind. These, however, he at present altogether overlooks: his complaints here run in a very different channel; his thoughts dwell upon another circumstance of distress, which bore an heavier weight, which communicated a deeper sting to his mind, and, in comparison with which, all his other calamities appeared light and trifling. He looks back to Zion, he calls to mind the blessed exercises of that holy place of God, and tenderly laments the peculiar infelicity of his fate, in being excluded from those sublime joys, deprived of communion with the people of God, and prevented from mingling his tribute of praise with the company of those who fear his holy name,—a circumstance in the conduct of this psalm, which was exactly agreeable to the character of that pious man; for never surely was there an heart more open to all the ardours of piety, or in which the fires of devotion burnt

burnt with a more vigorous flame. The SERM.
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most endearing views of God were ever present to his mind, and kindled those lively sentiments of adoration and love, which he never failed to encourage, and which he always delighted to express. Accordingly we find him, in this psalm, expressing the warmest sense of the excellence and loveliness of those divine employments; sending forth his whole soul in the most ardent aspirations towards God, and in the most vehement desires to be restored to the joyful privileges of his worshippers: "How amiable," says he, "are thy tabernacles O Lord of hosts! "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, for "the courts of the Lord: my heart and "my flesh crieth out for the living God." Nothing can be imagined more truly beautiful and pathetic, or more strongly descriptive of the present anxiety of his mind, and its vigorous tendency towards God, than the sentiment contained in the following verse; where he forms a comparison between his own situation and that of the birds of the air, and expresses an innocent envy of their superior felicity, in

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in being allowed that free access to the tabernacle of which he was deprived:
 “The sparrow hath found an house, and
 “the swallow a nest for herself, where she
 “may lay her young, even thine alters,
 “O Lord of hosts, my King and my God.
 “Blessed are they that dwell in thy house;
 “they will be still praising thee.”

In discoursing from the words of the text, I shall endeavour,

1st, To consider our obligation to Divine praise in general.

2^d, To illustrate the propriety and reasonableness of public praise in particular; and to enforce the duty of drawing near to God in the devout exercises of his house.

3^d, To point out the blessedness, the pleasure and advantage, which result from the sublime exercises of praise and devotion.

Let us, *first*, consider our obligation to Divine praise in general.

It must be evident that this obligation is founded in the very nature of man, in that constitution with which he is endowed. It is perfectly natural to the mind to venerate every high degree of perfection,

tion, to esteem every excellence of character which it discovers, and to be charmed with every benevolent feature that appears in the conduct of those whom it admires ; and must not the all-perfect character of God claim the highest degree of these affections ? “ Who in heaven can be “ compared to the Lord ? Who among “ the sons of the mighty can be likened “ to our God ? ” How great and glorious must that Being appear, who is the author of such astonishing effects, who hath created so many worlds, and hung them all upon his throne ? Is there not something within the breast, which not only acknowledges the Being, the incomprehensible majesty of this God, but which intimates the nature of his government, the union of his infinite greatness with the most active love, and represents them both as constantly employed to advance the good of his works ? Does not our own experience perpetually confirm this fact ? How precious do we find his thoughts towards us ! How great is the sum of them ! He formed the astonishing structure of the body, adjusted all its organs with an amazing propriety, and

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and adapted every part to the necessary duties of life. Thus, curiously formed, but of a make delicate and tender, we enter on the theatre of life, weak, and utterly defenceless. The first stages of our existence are full of giddiness and inattention; and in those helpless seasons, with what an infinite variety of dangers are we assaulted. When we advance in life, and by experience have learned the proper knowledge and feeling of dangers, we reflect with astonishment on the hazards through which we have run, we remember them with dread and horror.

Amidst such alarming dangers, where was our safety, but from the kind and merciful interposition of heaven? Where our shelter, but from the gracious protection of the providence of God? Hath he not attended all our paths with a shepherd's care, warding off that variety of death which hath encompassed all our goings; and often turning the barren wilderness of life into a fruitful land? Amidst our troubles and afflictions, hath he not often wiped away the tear of sorrow, and dispelled the surrounding clouds of

of darkness? In the multitude of our perplexing doubts, hath he not administered light and direction? Hath he not fortified the mind; given strength to the feeble arm, when ready to yield to that assault which must have destroyed the virtue, and ruined the everlasting happiness of the soul? That life, derived at first from his undeserved goodness, doth not the same benevolent hand support, by his unwearied bounty? He guards and sustains our health, on which all our relish of happiness is founded. He supports, in its proper tone, the wonderful and complicated machinery of the body. He is the great Sovereign, who is able to save and to destroy; in whose hand our breath is, and whose are all our ways. Let the perpetual exercises of his supporting Arm be but for one moment, interrupted, or suspended, and this curiously fashioned frame would instantly become the seat of infirmity and disease; would reel and totter, and sink into the dust from which it arose.

Every object which is requisite to supply our returning wants, which is suited
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to minister to the convenience, or to assist the necessities of life, proceeds from the liberal treasures of his love. The world, with all its precious stores, with all its valuable furniture, is the property of God alone. His hand, behind the scene, adjusts and regulates every cause, so as to produce the proper effect; and every blessing we at present enjoy, is as really the gift of God, as if we saw, with these bodily eyes, his arm stretched forth to minister the boon.

But, do not the temporal blessings of Providence, great and substantial as they undoubtedly are, vanish and disappear, when compared with the higher gifts of Grace? "Herein, above all, hath God commended his love to us, in that while we were yet sinners, he spared not his own Son, but gave him up to the death for us, that we through him might have life." To expatiate, however, on this noble theme, would carry us into too wide a field; for, who can express the loving kindness of the Lord, or shew forth all his praise.

Gratitude

Gratitude to such a Being, is that obligation, which every dictate of reason, and every feeling of the heart, immediately acknowledges; and the neglect of which, must justly rank us among the number of those who disgrace the human character. Shall that man be reckoned just and righteous, who, though he may regularly perform all the offices of social duty, neglects the most essential acts of piety to his God? His virtue is improperly founded; he lives in the violation of the capital law of Justice itself, while he withholds the pious returns of adoration, gratitude and love, from him who is the Maker of all, the Author and preserver of his life, and the Redeemer of his soul. Why, indeed, was the eye of man formed with an upward look, and taught to survey the wonders of Omnipotence which hang over his head; for what end was the sense of beauty, harmony and goodness stamped upon his mind, but that he who is the principal figure amongst these works of God, the great High Priest of this part of his creation, should offer up this daily sacrifice to the great Lord
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and Father of all, in his own name, and in the name of all the creatures of God, adopting the animated invocation of the pious Psalmist; "Bless the Lord ye his
"angels that excell in strength, that do
"his commandments, hearkening to the
"voice of his word. Bless the Lord all
"ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do
"his pleasure. Bless the Lord all his
"works, in all places of his dominion:
"Bless the Lord O my soul."

We now proceed, in the *second* place, to illustrate the propriety and reasonableness of public praise in particular, and to enforce the duty of drawing near to God in the devout exercises of his house.

Mankind are all but one society, the family of one great Master. By one hand are they all upheld; from one source do they derive all their mercies. Is it not then extremely fit and proper that they should embrace every opportunity of acknowledging their common dependence, and of joining together in offering up their united songs of praise, for that common goodness which befriends them all? The society of Christians; the household
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of faith, are the members of one body, deriving, in common, life and spirit, and joy, from one exalted and invisible Head. SERM.
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Must it not then be highly incumbent on them to bow down together, to join in adoration of their common Lord and Redeemer; and, by their uniform and unanimous acknowledgments, to testify the unity of their faith, and their joint relation to their munificent Benefactor? Besides, men were made for society, mutually to affect and animate one another. By joining together in the public offices of piety, our sympathy and emulation are naturally enlivened; devotion's warmest touch is impressed upon the heart; its flame is fed, strengthened, and increased; and our united prayers and praises ascend vigorous and ardent to the throne of God, and find a favourable and propitious ear.

The injunctions of the Gospel, which require this duty, are, we all know, strong and positive, and lead us to make an observation, which, we will venture to affirm, is well founded, and unquestionable,—That the form of religion may be without any thing of its

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power

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power and reality; but that its vital power can scarcely be supposed to exist without a compliance with its forms and institutions. The first part of this observation has been, alas! but too much justified, by melancholy experience. But, shall the ordinances of religion suffer in our estimation, because they have been abused by wretched and corrupt men? Have not such men rather good reason to tremble? for most assuredly their sacrifices are an abomination to the Lord. On the other hand, it will always be hard to conceive, how a true and vigorous love to God can subsist within the heart, separated from an humble deference to the appointments of his will. Sobriety and righteousness of conduct; an attention to all the duties which we owe to ourselves and to our neighbours, though we should suppose them united to the private exercises of piety, are not sufficient to constitute the whole of a religious character. There may be reason still to doubt of the sincerity of such a piety; for piety, when it is true and genuine, is not a sluggish and indolent, but an ardent and vigorous principle,

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ciple, and naturally excites the soul to lay hold of such external opportunities as are established by Divine authority; of giving indulgence to its own generous ardors; of ascribing glory and honour to the Divine Majesty; and of mingling its tribute of praise with the society of his faithful worshippers. Hence, in the character of pious men of old, we find the most just impressions of the propriety and value of these exercises of public devotion, and with what vehemence they panted after such approaches to God.

“ O that I knew where I might find him,
 “ that I might come, even unto his seat.
 “ Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine
 “ house, the place where thine honour
 “ dwelleth; that I may publish with the
 “ voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all
 “ thy mighty acts. O God, my God,
 “ early will I seek thee. As the hart
 “ panteth after the water brooks, so long-
 “ eth my soul after thee, O God; when
 “ shall I come, and appear before the living
 “ God? My flesh crieth out for thee; my
 “ soul thirsteth for thee, as in a dry and
 “ thirsty land, wherein is no water, that

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“ I may behold thy power and thy glory,
“ as I have seen thee heretofore within
“ thy sanctuary. Thus shall my soul be
“ satisfied as with marrow and fatness,
“ and my mouth shall praise thee with
“ joyful lips. How excellent is thy lov-
“ ing kindness, O God ! The children of
“ men shall put their trust under the
“ shadow of thy wings. They shall be
“ satisfied with the fatness of thy house,
“ and thou shalt make them to drink of
“ the rivers of thy pleasures ; for with
“ thee is the fountain of life, and in thy
“ light shall they see light.”

Did then these pious men of old exercise such an affection for the courts of God, and such an ardent desire for religious services ; and have not we superior reason to be glad, when it is said unto us, “ Go up unto the house of God ; when “ our feet” are allowed to “ stand with- “ in the gates of our Jerusalem ?” They were permitted only to see the happy day afar off, and rejoiced in the prospect. To them the Almighty appeared under a deep impenetrable vail, concealing from their eyes the lustre of his nature, and
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sacred perfections; or imparting but partial and confined views of his gracious purposes to mankind. The cloud which rested upon the tabernacle; the glory of the Lord which filled the temple; the visible symbols of the Divine presence, are now succeeded by the brighter effulgence of the latter house. The Redeemer himself hath now come to Zion; the Messenger of the covenant to establish the nations; to reign, to prosper, and to execute judgment in the earth. In our sanctuary, the Deity lays aside the ensigns of terrible majesty, and descends in benevolence and love. Here it is permitted to recognise the accomplishment of those illustrious wonders of his grace, which the most exalted perfection can only pry into; which the tongue of angels is incapable of describing; and which an unmeasurable eternity shall not be sufficient to celebrate and praise. How extremely reasonable, then, must it be for Christians to join together in these sublime contemplations; and what a decent, beautiful, and glorious spectacle, to behold those who are called the chosen genera-

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tion, the royal priesthood, the holy nation, the peculiar people, raising their united voice of adoration and gratitude, and with ardor and true devotion, uttering forth the praises of Him who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light. A religious assembly, occupied in these Divine employments, is none else than the very gate of heaven; a lively representation of those blessed regions, the seats of unity and love, and recalls to our thoughts the generous exercises of those exalted and perfect spirits who cast down their crowns before the throne, and with loud, united voices, shout forth, "Halleluiah, salvation, glory, honour and power unto the Lord their God!"

Think not then that such devotions are matters of indifference. Is not heaven that place for which is required preparation, habit, and exercise? But how can we expect to enter there, to mingle in the acclamations of that triumphant host, if we do not attend and habituate our minds to devotion upon earth; if we are not careful to acquire a
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relish for those occupations, in which the happiness and delights of that place consist?

We proceed, in the last place, to point out the *bleſſedneſs*, the pleaſure and advantage which reſult from the ſublime exerciſes of praiſe and devotion. An aſſembly of the ſaints is an object peculiarly pleaſing to God. “He loves the “gates of Zion more than all the dwell-“ings of Jacob;” and what he loves and delights in muſt be the ſcene of happineſs. The preſence of God is unlimited; his eyes are in every place; he is conſcious of the moſt retired thoughts of his ſervants; he ſees and will reward the ſecret acts of every devout heart. But we are taught to believe, that in his courts he maniſeſts himſelf, and diſpenſeth his favours in a peculiar manner: There the great Maſter of aſſemblies often ſhines forth in all his glory, communicating the liveliest impreſſions of his majeſty and excellence to thoſe who wait upon him with unfeigned piety, who ſerve him in ſincerity and truth: There he often deſcends in all the energy of his grace, with all thoſe

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sacred influences, which revive the hearts of his humble worshippers, which invigorate their languid graces, and fill their souls with "much joy and peace in believing."

Besides, in every such pious service, a generous and exalted pleasure arises in the soul of man, from a consciousness which resides within the heart, that our affections do then act according to their nature, and are directed to their right and proper objects. And, what object of our affection and esteem can be equal to the ever blessed God? In every exercise of religious worship, the soul is conscious of acting a part most truly worthy of itself, and by which it is most essentially dignified and ennobled. Here too it can never exceed. Man may mistake the degrees of goodness in any character, may feel more pleasure in the contemplation of its excellencies, and pay it an higher admiration than it deserves; but here the soul is liable to no fears of being disappointed in its views of the dignity and perfection of the object which it adores. "When you glorify the Lord," says the son of Syrach, "exalt him

“him as much as ye can, for even yet
“will he far exceed; and when ye exalt
“him, put forth all your strength, and be
“not weary, for you can never go far
“enough.”

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Some there may be, who are unwilling to indulge themselves in these ardors of devotion, and from an inward dread of extravagance and wildness of mind, wish to practise what they call a reasonable service, something that hath no connection with the heart and affections, and which is seated in the understanding alone. But if there are high feelings, if there are sublime affections within the breast, shall they not be indulged; and if they are indulged, what object can be so proper to excite them, or on whom can they be so reasonably placed, as on him who gave them, who is himself the most excellent and amiable of all Beings, and the only proper object of our most exalted powers? Certain it is, that he who lives in the constant and habitual neglect of these divine exercises, or who practises them without the emotions and feelings of devotion, must be destitute of true elevation and enlargement of mind,
must

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must wear something very wrong about the heart; the life and spirit of Christianity dwells not there.

But farther, let us attend to the high improvement which such exercises naturally produce in every devout character. In these exercises we lift up our souls in the warmest gratitude to the living God, acknowledging with cheerfulness of heart the wonders of his unmerited bounty and love; and surely the sincere acknowledgment that he is the Father of lights, the Author and source of life and being, and all things, must create within the mind that reasonable humility, which will prevent us from overrating our own good qualities, and give us a full sense of our entire dependence upon him for all that we now enjoy, or expect hereafter. From devout addresses to God, and solemn intercourse with him, may we not naturally expect to receive that transforming influence, which will mould our souls to the resemblance of his high and all-perfect character? We all know, that, in the course of human life, every wise and good man accounts it one of the best ingredients

ingredients in earthly happiness, to be intimately connected with a person by whose wise discernment, and worthy example, he may be improved in wisdom and in virtue. Do we not most naturally learn the very style, adopt the sentiments, and draw into our own character the most indifferent habits of those whom we venerate as wise, and with whom we live as friends? In like manner, by cultivating society and friendship with this all-perfect Being, we acquire a resemblance to those qualities which shine with infinite splendor in his illustrious Image; and "beholding," with devout eyes, all "his glory, are changed into the same image, from glory to glory, as by the Spirit of the Lord." Thus, must there not naturally spring up within the heart the most comprehensive charity to mankind; a tender feeling of their pains; lenity to their faults; indulgence to all who differ from us in opinion; and forgiveness of all who have done us wrong? For, Who is the God whom we adore? No partial friend, no limited benefactor; but the

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the common Father and Friend of all; who hath made of one blood all nations that dwell upon the face of the earth, and who commands his sun to shine, and his rain to fall, on the just and unjust. Hence we must naturally look upon our fellow creatures, amidst all their wants and infirmities, with a most favourable and compassionate eye; as those who depend upon the same Providence; who are upheld by the same Arm; who share in the same common happiness, and are in all respects equally allied to the same Father. What consideration, indeed, so effectual, to unite all the worshippers of God in the closest ties of affection to each other, and to raise them above the power of every malevolent disposition, which is so opposite to the nature of that Supreme Being, who is love unbounded, and unalloyed?

Let not devotion then, in any of its exercises, be thought to have the most distant tendency to draw a gloom over the mind; to plant a frown upon the countenances of men, or to sour and contract the heart. If that has sometimes been
observed,

observed, let no prejudice be drawn from thence against these sacred exercises: Charge it not upon them; but let it be imputed to its proper cause; to some very great disorder in the understanding, or to some peculiarly bad quality in the temper of the heart. It is the true and real influence of devotion, to sweeten the tempers of men; to render them generous and humane; to give to the soul the most enlarged and animating views; and by educating it in true piety, to render it wise with regard to its everlasting interests, and peaceful and composed in its present situation.

Upon the whole, let us ever delight to dwell in the courts of God; to adore his Divine Majesty in the public services of his temple; animated with that genuine piety, which alone can render the thoughts of the Divine presence pleasant and agreeable to the soul of man, and procure the reciprocal regards of heaven. We shall conclude with the words of Job:
“ If thou return to the Almighty, thou
“ shalt be built up. Thou shalt put
“ away

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“away iniquity far from thy tabernacles;
“then shall the Almighty be thy defence:
“thou shalt have thy delight in him,
“and lift up thy face unto God. Thou
“shalt make thy prayer unto him, and
“he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay
“thy vows.”

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S E R M O N XII.

ON THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST.

I PETER ii. 21.

— *Leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps.*

WHEN the upright and untainted mind applies itself to the serious consideration of the Christian religion, it immediately acknowledges that it conveys the most sacred and salutary truths which were ever published to the ear of man; and perceives that all its parts are intimately and necessarily connected, contributing their united influence to reform the hearts, and to elevate

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elevate the hopes of men. It is the power of God, and the wisdom of God, to enlighten our ignorance ; to reform our corruptions ; to break afunder the fatal yoke of sin and folly ; and to unite us to God, our sovereign good. But, to the honour of this sublime system, it must be farther observed, that, besides the intrinsic merit and excellence of its discoveries and precepts, it contains another advantage totally peculiar to itself. It doth not content itself with delineating the noblest rules for the conduct of life, which might perhaps only gain the cold and un-affecting approbation of the mind ; but, to all the precepts which it inculcates, it superadds the highest dignity, energy, and obligation, by exhibiting a character in which they are fully displayed, and regularly drawn forth into practice. It directs us to contemplate the Author and Finisher of our faith, who, while he sojourned upon earth, appeared in all the beauties of grace and truth ; exemplifying all his laws in every step of his conduct ; and establishing a visible pattern of every virtue for the imitation of the world. Let

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us begin with observing, in general, the great superiority of this to every other example. If we are properly acquainted with the present state of human nature, we will be fully convinced of its frailty and corruption, and will despair of ever finding, in this condition of weakness and infirmity, a perfect pattern of innocence. Even in those persons whom we are accustomed to look upon with admiration, and to consider as the standards of wisdom and excellence, there are many blemishes to be found. These blemishes, however, are concealed from our view, or even consecrated to our minds, by that strong veneration we have learned to pay to their general character. Thus, when we form a strict friendship, which is founded on the esteem of any particular person, and fix upon his example as the object of our imitation, from that very moment, there is no feature in his character which we will be disposed to reckon indifferent; because our passions become strongly interested, and blind the judgment. Hence, unless we are singularly acute, unless we

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exercise a very peculiar degree of discernment, we are in great danger of being misled, and, along with those perfections which deserve our esteem, may be ready to adopt the defects which we ought to avoid. Here then appears the superior value and excellence of the example of the Son of God,—an example totally free from those errors or follies which run through the conduct of the best of men. Here is to be found every good quality, untainted, unmixed, and unallayed. Here are to be found all the graces and virtues collecting their strongest heat, and spreading their brightest lustre, to fire the soul with a virtuous ardour ; to enlighten and direct the path of life.

It is another obvious advantage of this example, that it is calculated to extend its influence to all the world. The situation in which our Saviour appeared to exhibit this example was wisely chosen for the purpose. He appeared not in those affluent and exalted circumstances in which there may be little opportunity of displaying the exercise of the most substantial, and,

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at the same time, the most difficult graces, or in which the benefit of his pattern would have been confined to the smallest part of the world ; but in those more mean and humble scenes of life, which constitute the general lot of men, where his example might have the most extensive influence, and suit most effectually the present condition and necessities of human nature.

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Let us now proceed to select, from the numerous graces which adorned the character of our Redeemer, a few of the most important. And here it will surely be almost unnecessary to observe, because it must be obvious to the reflection of every mind, that it is not every branch of that character which we are required to imitate. His supernatural operations, the exertions of Divinity, by which he proved himself the Son of God with power, these were the displays of essential perfection, peculiar to the Deity himself, incommunicable to his creatures, and after which it would imply the highest degree of presumption and impiety in us to aspire. The great line in which we are to follow

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the Author and Finisher of our faith, is in the practice of those distinguished virtues which adorned his character, and which constituted it the standard of moral excellence. And surely such a display of all the beauties of holiness must throw the most sacred radiance upon the person of the Redeemer, and constitute its true Divinity, in the estimation of all the wise, the worthy, and discerning part of the world.

The first feature of this kind which we take notice of, is his piety to God. Dear was ever this affection to his heart: An affection which discovered itself with the first dawnings of reason, when he was found delighting in the worship and service of God in the temple. It was his meat and drink, the great consolation of his whole life, to withdraw his thoughts from this busy and giddy scene; to give up his mind to pious and heavenly contemplation; to resign himself to the sublime raptures of devotion. His piety, though warm and ardent, was not ungovernable and impetuous, or fickle and unsteady.

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steady. His temper was ever calm, and peaceful, and serene, such as might naturally be expected to take place within a mind rejoicing in those blessed exercises, whose natural effect is not to sour and corrupt the heart, but to improve its most excellent feelings; to mould it to the image and likeness of that God whom we adore; to render it merciful, and generous, and humane, like him who is the great source of love. Are there any, then, who look upon devotion as a slight, a trivial, an indifferent branch of religious duty? Are there any who, from an inward dread of enthusiasm, or wildness of mind, coolly determine to practise what they call a reasonable service, something that hath no connection with the heart and affections, but which is seated in the understanding alone? And, shall it be held consistent with reason to check those high feelings, those sublime affections which we are conscious are wrought into the soul of man; or to prevent the course of their fullest exertions towards that Great Being, who is their only proper and ade-

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quate object? Certain it is, that he who lives in the habitual neglect of these sublime exercises, or who practises them with a stupid and listless indifference, must be chargeable with some very essential defect in the heart; must be an utter stranger to those feelings which Christianity labours to inspire: the life and spirit of the pious Jesus is not there.

Another very capital feature in the character of the Redeemer, was his contempt of the pomp and vanities of life. The state in which he appeared did by no means correspond, in the eye of sense, to that dignity which the Jews supposed to be implied in the august character under which he was predicted. He was arrayed with none of that dazzling splendour which might be supposed to procure reverence for him in the minds of those men who rejoiced only in the prospect of a temporal majesty, destined, as they imagined, to establish and confirm their present dispensation; to increase and amplify its temporal rewards; to dispense the good things of this world with a still more liberal profusion; to restore their
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native glory ; to shake the Roman throne ; and to overawe their enemies by the terror of his arms. Had this been in the least consistent with the purposes of his incarnation, then, undoubtedly, he who was the heir of the universe ; who was invested with an uncontrouled dominion ; to whose voice all the elements obsequiously listened ; who commanded the winds and the seas, and they instantly obeyed him ; might have at once taken his station upon the highest pinnacle of human ambition ; might have assumed to himself all the accumulated treasures of this earth, and shone in all its brightest glories. But the great Lord from heaven possessed an heart that was infinitely superior to every such low enchantment, and too capacious to be filled with such phantastical and shadowy blifs. He manifested the most intrinsic greatness of mind, by pouring contempt on all the ensigns of human pride, and trampling under foot all those objects which are accounted great and desirable by the generality of mankind. The joys of this earth, the little vanities which bewitch the giddy spirit of man, contained

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no charm for the Son of God. The humble vale of life he chose to dignify by his own example, and trod, for our benefit, the difficult and solitary paths of poverty and distress. Here, then, let us look unto Jesus; let us derive from this part of his character an argument for patience, and a source of consolation under those situations which men are ready to account so grievous. Art thou in poor and indigent circumstances? remember that peevish complaints on this head, proceeding from the mouth of a Christian, afford a strong suspicion that his mind is too much captivated with the deceitful glare of the world, and the things of the world, and has unhappily contracted that friendship with them which is enmity to his God. Art thou discontented with thy condition, dissatisfied with the low sphere allotted to thee by Providence, intoxicated with high notions of earthly greatness and riches, and devoured with envy of those who possess them? believe it, such sentiments can never correspond to the temper which belongs to the disciples of Him, whose heart was totally alienated from all the gaudy deceits

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deceits of life, and whose glory consisted in contemning such empty toys. Be persuaded, that in order to become a real friend and follower of Jesus, thou must enter, with more alacrity, into his sentiments, and turn away thine eyes from viewing the vanities of life, to acquire those substantial virtues which adorned the Saviour, and which the most abject situation in life cannot exclude thee from displaying. "Put on the Lord Jesus Christ." Put on his humility, and it shall clothe thee. His grace shall be to thee as a robe, and as a diadem.

Another most important feature in this illustrious character was, the ardour of his benevolence. The very object of his appearance upon earth, and of all the labours of love which he accomplished here below, exhibit to our view a picture of benevolence, superior to any thing which the eye hath seen, or the heart of man can properly conceive. "Scarcely for a righteous man will one die; peradventure for a good man some will even dare to die; but in this he commended his love to us, that while we were yet
finners,

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“ sinners, and enemies to God by wicked works, he died for us, the Just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God.” — “ He went about continually doing good.” From him no calamity departed unrelieved ; no suppliant who did not receive the requested boon. He made bare the arm of Omnipotence ; never to gratify the vain and idle curiosity of men, far less to hurl the thunders of Divine vengeance on the heads of his enemies ; but to restore to the cheerful light of day the eyes of the blind, to heal the diseased, and to raise the dead to life. Here, then, let us look unto Jesus, contemplating, with a steady eye, this endearing feature of Divinity, till our hearts become fully enamoured with its beauty, and learn to catch something of the same Divine spirit. If we are duly affected by this noble contemplation, will not every principle of malevolence naturally wither and die within the breast, and every tender emotion rise and flourish with peculiar grace and beauty ? From this Divine pattern, we will immediately learn wherein our true superiority and greatness must consist ;

confist; and study to acquire that elevation of mind, which may raise our views above all those lesser objects, that are so foreign to our nature. We will consider the warm feelings of benevolence, and an activity in generous conduct, as our most eminent distinction; because it renders us like to Him, who, though he was the Son of the Highest, condescended to become the humble and afflicted Son of man, that he might lead a life full of an uninterrupted series of the most beneficent deeds.

The last feature of his great character which we take notice of at present, was his meekness and patience. Trace him through all the steps of an afflicted and miserable life, and you will find him fortified with all that magnanimity, which no face of sorrow, no engine of adversity, could ever discompose. Contemplate Him particularly in the last and closing scene of life. With what serenity and peacefulness of mind did he endure the affronts, the mockeries, and unparalleled cruelties of men; and even in his expiring moments, invent a charitable apology for his

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his murderers, and employ his last breath in kind intercessions for those infatuated men who shed his blood ! Do we then observe him, in the midst of the most grievous calamities, with unshaken complacency, acquiescing in the will of his Father, which he was invincibly determined to fulfil ? Do we see him, in the midst of the most provoking injuries, calm and serene, possessing those treasures of cool and steady peace, which all the impotent malice of the world could never unsettle or wrest from him ? From him, then, let us determine to learn our duty ; to regulate our character ; and henceforth to consider every appearance of a peevish and fretful temper under the corrections of Providence, of an inflammable, fiery and resentful spirit, as criminal in every man ; but shockingly inconsistent in the disciple of an insulted and crucified Saviour ; of the meek and patient Lamb of God.

Thus, we have considered some of those divine graces which adorned the character of the great Author and Finisher of our faith. Thus did Jesus live, and thus he died ; and in his life, and in his death,
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hath drawn forth to light every amiable affection that can claim our esteem and love. If his character is not distinguished by those specious and dazzling qualities, which are often most dangerous and detrimental to the world, but which excite the wonder of unthinking men, it exhibits ornaments infinitely more real, and recommends to our imitation qualities more truly great and generous. The giddy and undiscerning world may shout forth their wild acclamations to that victorious monarch, who shakes the kingdoms, and makes the world a wilderness; whose pride and ambition have laid waste the earth; whose path is marked with the thickest carnage; and whose sword is stained with the blood of thousands: But the sober and worthy mind will rejoice and triumph in the contemplation of that peaceful Messiah, whose majesty is softened with the most attractive smiles of tender compassion and anxious love; who comes to raise his faithful subjects to the noblest blessings; and prepares them for those enjoyments, by correcting their tempers; by checking the ravages of envy
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and ambition; by soothing the turbulence of every rude passion; and by composing the world to peace and rest.

But to draw to a conclusion. Let us lift our eyes from that low estate in which he appeared, as the pattern for our steps, and consider Him as no longer the humble and afflicted Jesus of Nazareth, but as the Lord of glory, and the illustrious Prince of life. Though he hath now ascended to his God and our God, to his Father and our Father, he hath not left this world benighted, friendless, or forlorn. The sacred rays of his grace still shine around all his disciples, and his ministering spirits perpetually befriend them. He who hath pointed out the path of duty, who hath marked it by his own peculiar example, from the residence of his glory, still urgeth, on the Christian's attentive ear, the consolations of his love. "Fear not, I have prayed the Father, and he shall send the Comforter to guide thee unto all truth. My grace shall be sufficient for thee, my strength shall be made perfect in thy weakness." And to quicken our alacrity,

crity, and inflame our pious ambition, he points to the celestial rewards of virtue, directing the eye of faith to those distinguished seats which are reserved for his steadfast and zealous followers. To them He thus addresseth himself: "In my Father's house are many mansions; here I prepare a place for you. To him that overcometh, will I grant to sit down in this kingdom of my Father, even as I have overcome, and am set down with him on his throne." Animated by this joyful prospect, let us "gird up the loins of our minds, and run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith."

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S E R M O N XIII.

ON RELIGIOUS TRANQUILLITY.

JOHN xiv. 27.

Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

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OUR Lord was now about to offer up his life as an expiation and atonement for the sins of men. He foresaw that this would prove a sad and dismal event to his own disciples, who appeared hitherto to have little apprehension of their Master's sufferings, but rather dreamed of much present pomp and honour

honour to distinguish the person of the Messiah, and to reward his favourites. SERM.
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For this reason, he graciously condescended to comfort and fortify their minds against the coming trial, by explaining at great length the intention of his sufferings, and setting before them the precious benefits which should from thence result to them in particular, and to all Christians in general.

In the words which lie before us, he addresses them with all the tender endearments of the most affectionate love; and like a kind departing friend, bequeathes to them his best blessing.

In discoursing from them, I am naturally led to inquire into the nature of this gift of Jesus, and to illustrate its superiority to all the gifts which it is in the power of this world to bestow.

This world, what is it, but a scene of much vanity and delusion, a rank field, where cares, vexations, and disappointments grow thick and numerous? Does it court thy fond unwary heart, and spread before thee all its amplest treasures as the best inheritance of man?

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View, with cool and steady eyes, the gifts which it presents, and say, if they were ever found, in experience, to communicate that satisfaction which they promise; or if all its accumulated possessions can be supposed sufficient to satisfy the large desires of the heart. Wretched, indeed, must be the situation of that man, who chooses to tread in the path of folly and vanity; who has betaken himself to worldly pursuits, and laid hold on these as his sole and ultimate portion. Having alienated himself from God, and devoted himself to this world, he has for ever renounced all peace and felicity of mind. He falls in love with something on the road, which appears fair and promising at a distance, but which withers and dies upon the touch. A succeeding attainment, it is expected, will give that pleasure which was vainly hoped for from the former; but the passions turn stronger and more fierce, the desires and appetites increase and multiply, a thousand artificial wants and necessities are introduced into the mind, and the whole soul is at last inflamed, and scorched with that thirst

thirst which is never gratified; and which, far from being abated, is rather increased by the pleasures it reacheth. The farther he wanders from God, and from his duty, the deeper doth he plunge himself into misery and wretchedness; and every successive step leads to some fresh scene of woe, until he is involved in intricate and perplexed mazes, from whence his retreat becomes difficult or desperate, and where numberless dreadful forms perpetually arise to insult and terrify his mind.

The misery of those who walk by sight, and not by faith, who lead a life of sense and guilt, is thus emphatically described in the sacred writings: "The way of the transgressor is hard, he travaileth with pain all his days. Trouble and anguish prevail against him. Terrors make him afraid on every side. A dreadful sound is in his ears, for the Lord giveth him a trembling heart, failing of eyes, and sorrow of mind. How often is the candle of the wicked suddenly put out! God distributeth sorrows in his anger, and maketh him to drink of the wrath of the Almighty.

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“ For this is the portion of a wicked man,
“ and this the heritage appointed him by
“ God.” Dost thou then labour for real
peace of mind ? Fruitless is the search for
it in the deceitful abodes of folly, of
worldly enjoyments, or unhallowed plea-
sures. Despair of ever finding it in any
corner of this corrupted spot of earth.
It resides in heaven. It is the offspring
of goodness. It is the property of the
disciple of Jesus, who wins it from its
celestial abode, and fixes it in his heart
by piety alone. For him his Master
hath provided that ineffable peace and
establishment of mind, which cometh
from God, which strangers intermeddle
not with, which passeth all understand-
ing. Here is a happiness suited to
the nature, and adequate to the feelings
and desires of his soul. The joys result-
ing from the favour of God, and the
testimony of a good conscience, ani-
mate and brighten every region of his
heart ; and through every step of life,
that settled calm which virtue inspires
into the breast, that inward serenity
which composeth the mind, renders his
sleep

sleep sweet, and yields him a continual feast. Reconciled to God and to his own heart, in full friendship with himself, he possesseth that peace, which is totally independent of this world, and of all those cowardly arts of dissipation, from which others derive a feverish and momentary delight. He has no occasion to plunge into the noise and bustle of the world, to drown the uneasy returns of thought. He dreads not to converse with himself. Solitude is his friend; retirement is his solace. With pleasure he withdraws from the hurry of life, and contemplates the beauties which dwell at home. He listens with rapture to the kind whispers of his conscience, and welcomes the images which his memory presents.

Besides, that peace which the world may be supposed to give is most capricious, temporary and uncertain, as the objects on which it is founded lie open to continual accidents. "I saw the wicked," says the Psalmist, "great in power, spreading himself like a green bay tree; but I passed, and lo! he was not; yea I fought him diligently, but he could not

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"be found." How does he build his comely structure of happiness on the most sandy foundation; and when the winds of affliction blow, when the inevitable storm of death beats upon it, that house must fall, and great indeed must be the fall thereof. For his peace, his joy, his happiness, and his all, lie buried in its ruins. Most elegantly, too, does Job describe this instability of the wicked man's peace. "His hope shall be cut off; his trust shall be the spider's web. He shall lean upon his house, but it cannot stand. He may hold it fast, but it cannot endure."

But the supreme excellency of this sacred gift will particularly appear, if we consider how admirably it corresponds to the present necessities of human nature, and how well suited it is to give relief to the heart in all those seasons where humanity lifts its most urgent voice for aid and consolation. A spirit sunk under the consciousness of guilt, wounded with the stings of self-condemnation, and alarmed with apprehensions of the Divine wrath, is certainly the most insufferable evil in human

human life. It is an evil which must corrupt the relish of all earthly enjoyments, which, while it remains in the mind, must render every present satisfaction tasteless and insipid. It is a burden which no power or dexterity of man can remove or alleviate. Can affluence seduce the faithful deputy of God from his office; silence his voice, or turn aside his steady and impartial lash? Can the adulations of a fawning multitude exorcise those legions of cares which prey upon the vitals of the sinner, and haunt him wherever he goes? Can human might contend with the Omnipotent, or disarm his vindictive hand of that thunder which is prepared for ungodly man, and ready to be hurled upon his head?

In this situation, should he strive to gather comfort to his soul, by consulting the intimations of nature with respect to the character and designs of God, he is immediately disappointed, and gives up the search. For great and striking as the demonstrations of the Divine character are, in the natural and moral government of the world, yet still it must be confessed,

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that

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that here the sacred image of God doth not appear so full and ample as the necessities of the human soul require. Some important features of that image it still desiderates. But contemplate the face of Jesus, and you will discern it to be "full of grace and truth." There the whole countenance of God is gloriously complete, and every lineament drawn with the most exquisite proportions, which exhibit Him at once as the greatest and the most amiable of beings. In Jesus you behold the Deity arrayed with all that majesty and glory which inspire a sacred awe and reverence, and, at the same time, displaying those inviting tenderneſſes which excite our joy, our rapturous delight; proclaiming himself "the Lord God, merciful and gracious, slow to anger, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin." To all who, by the exercise of an hearty repentance, and true faith, return to the ways of God, and of their duty, Jesus hath revealed a propitiated Deity; thus administering the nobleſt medicine to nature in diſtreſs; to exhilarate the ſoul; to diſpel the cloud of ſorrow; to infuſe the oil of joy into the mourning ſpirit; to heal the

the broken heart; and to raise up him that was bowed down. That compassionate Saviour, who, in the days of his flesh, made bare the arm of Omnipotence to heal the diseased, to raise the dead to life, hath now become the skilful physician, who possesseth the spiritual balsam to heal the wounds of conscience, to cure the fevers of the soul, and to compose into peace and rest all its tumultuous fears.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are
“the feet of Him that bringeth peace,
“that publisheth salvation! Break forth
“into singing all ye people, for God hath
“visited his people, he hath redeemed
“Jerusalem. He hath made bare his
“holy arm in the eyes of all the nations;
“and all the ends of the earth have seen
“the salvation of our God.” Well doth
it become us then to attune our voices to
that song of triumph, which forms the
perpetual occupation of the ransomed of
the Lord, who have entered into the Zion
above, and with ardour and true devotion
to shew forth the praises of Him who
“hath washed us from our sins in his own
“blood, and made us kings and priests
“unto

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"unto God;" who from the depths of our fears hath recovered us to the capacity of entering into friendship with our Creator, in whose favour is our life, and whose loving-kindness is better than life.

Again: Amidst the multitude and variety of evils, which are the inheritance of human nature, the peace of Jesus alone is able to sustain the soul. In these situations, how wretched, friendless, and forlorn, must that man be, who depends for his support upon the peace which this world gives! Can the most liberal profusion of its gifts grant an exemption from the natural calamities of life, or administer any suitable solace to the heart when under the pressure of these evils? A dark and dismal cloud must then dwell upon the mind, through which the world can dart no ray of light or comfort. But, does not the religion of Jesus reflect a full light upon the whole constitution of nature, and enable us, in the most satisfying manner, to account for all those difficulties in the administration of God, which the vain and conceited reason of man was ready to arraign as so many blemishes in his

his illustrious character? Enlightened by the instructions of Christianity, we are led to consider this world, not in a detached and separate point of view, but as the beginning of life, the dawning of existence; as bearing a close and intimate reference to a more perfect state of things. If we keep this principle steadily in our minds, how many of the ways and dealings of God will it vindicate to man! Our sentiments will immediately alter with respect to the real value of the several distributions of Providence; and those things which are now named calamities, will be converted into the highest blessings, when they are considered in their proper light, as the instruments of advancing the highest good of man, the capacities and endowments of that mind which is appointed to survive this transitory and perishing scene.

Besides, to the faithful disciple of Jesus are appropriated the refreshing communications of Divine grace, sufficient to enable him to bear his present burdens, and to fill his soul with unspeakable consolation. To him belongs the promise, that
“ God

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“God will be with him in trouble.” And how much is implied in the favourable presence of the Almighty, which the righteous have reason to look for in all adversity? Or what external calamity can greatly disquiet that man, who is allowed to rejoice in the protection of so powerful a comforter? The great Father of all spirits maintains a close and intimate connection with the righteous. His eternal benevolence sympathizeth with all their sorrows. With a gentle and lenient hand he can smooth every rough tempestuous care that rageth upon the surface of the soul, and make peace, and light, and joy, to spring up in every corner of the heart.

But farther; the disciple of Jesus is comforted with the happy prospect of an end to all his sufferings, of a complete and final deliverance from all adversity. Hence he is enabled to rise superior to the dread of death, that event which shall effectually try the peace of the mind, which shall reduce the fortitude of every heart to its proper test. It is not in the power of this world to ward off that event, or to secure the

the establishment of the mind at its approach. Those tempting, lying vanities, which carested and fawned upon us during the prosperous sunshine of life, like treacherous friends, must abandon us in the night of darkness, and give us up a prey to this merciless enemy. Piety alone, though it cannot secure us from this inevitable fate of mortality, is able to fill the soul with much peace at the prospect of its approach; to smooth the pillow of the dying Christian; to refresh and solace his departing spirit. His confidence is in that Jesus, who hath himself tasted of death; who is the resurrection and the life; who hath sanctified and consecrated the grave for all his followers, and rendered it the passage to glory unchangeable and endless. Though, therefore, thou art now tossed on the stormy ocean of life, thy danger great, and thy fate severe; long it cannot last. Jesus, by the light of life, hath discovered to thee the port of ease, the happy refuge from every tempest, where all thy past sufferings shall be forever forgotten, or where the memory of them shall only serve to increase thy

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thy felicity. The righteous know, and are firmly persuaded, that as Daniel remained all night safe in the lions den, so they, in the night of death, shall lie down in peace, and take their quiet rest. Their God shall send his angel and stop the mouth of that devouring lion. In the morning of the resurrection, they shall be taken out of that den, entire and untouched, and rise to the possession of a serene, unclouded, and everlasting day.

Hence we are led to consider the happy efficacy of this sacred gift of Jesus to fortify the heart, in the last, the most solemn, and the concluding scene of all. A period there is, fixed in the eternal records of Providence, when this Jesus shall descend, in ineffable pomp and majesty, with the voice of the Archangel, and with the trump of God, to decide upon the characters of men, and to distribute the due rewards of their different deeds. At that season, what can this world give to inspire confidence into the breast, or to secure the favour of the Almighty Judge? This world, with all its fantastical ornaments, with all its boasted delights, the fond admiration

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miration of infatuated men, shall then rise in one general blaze, and vanish into smoke. What shall then avail the charms of pomp and ambition? The tremendous conqueror, who shook the kingdoms, who made the world a wilderness; behold him on that awful day. No acclamations signify his approach: No laurels adorn his brow. The common Parent of all respecteth not the persons of men. With one impartial glance he shall survey all his children; nor will he then acknowledge any distinction, but what integrity and virtue give. Conscious piety shall then inspire the breast with an honest confidence, and adorn the countenance with a radiant lustre. With rapture and exultation shall the righteous then spring forth to meet their Saviour, as one who comes to put them in possession of their best hopes, and to crown them with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

And what can I say more to allure you to come to Jesus, that ye may find rest and peace unto your souls. To whom indeed can we come, but unto Him, in whose hand it is to give peace and joy unto all; and

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and if he give quietness, who can make trouble?

Upon the whole: Do we value the peace and satisfaction of our own minds, in all the most interesting and alarming periods of our existence, then let it be our firm resolution to connect ourselves with Jesus, the sole author of consolation and joy. Let us devote our hearts to Him, to be moulded and fashioned by his grace; to be animated with that inviolable attachment to his will, that cordial adherence to piety and goodness, which is the true and stable foundation of inward peace, and without which all must be furious disorder and misery within.

S E R-

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ON THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

GALATIANS vi. 14.

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world.

THE smallest acquaintance with the history of the Jews is sufficient to convince us, that they were, in general, remarkably attached to their religious opinions, and zealously tenacious of all those external privileges, by which they were distinguished as the peculiar favourites of heaven. The institutions of

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their law they regarded not as the shadows of better things to come, and only of a temporary continuance and force, but as the special appointment of God himself; and they were consequently disposed to view them as containing something of a moral nature, and as of perpetual validity and obligation. For this reason, the Jewish converts, who could not divest themselves of their deep rooted prejudices, were highly offended at the simplicity of Christianity, and still persisted to maintain the influence of the ancient dispensation. This doctrine had been industriously and fervently propagated among the Galatians by those false teachers, who inculcated, upon every convert to Christianity, the necessity of a compliance with circumcision, and other ceremonial appointments.

To confute this opinion, and to represent the true nature and design of the gospel-dispensation, is the great subject of this epistle. To enforce his argument the more, the Apostle puts the Galatians in mind, in the verse before the text, of the mean and dishonourable views by which

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which such men were influenced; that their conduct did not proceed from any inward veneration for the law itself, whose ceremonial institutions were now superseded, by the appearance of Christianity in the world, but from a desire of accommodating themselves to the humour, and of insinuating themselves into the affection of the Jews; and thus preserving and increasing their own personal credit, and influence, and wealth. Full of an honest and virtuous indignation against such base and detestable conduct, the Apostle adds, in the words of the text, "But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of Christ." I too, might he say, was once zealous for the traditions of my fathers, and devoted to that religion, in which I had profited above many of my equals in my own nation. But, whatever extravagant fondness for these my spiritual advantages, I, as a Jew, and particularly as a pharisee, might be supposed to entertain; however, by my steadfast and unshaken adherence to these my once favourite tenets, I had indeed a fair

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and

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and promising opportunity of advancing my fortune, and of adding to that honour and reputation, which I had acquired by the labour and study of my life ; yet, God forbid that I should ever put these, or any other temporal considerations, in competition with the sacred and salutary doctrine of the cross of Christ. For this, I willingly renounce and sacrifice every present secular advantage. Of this most merciful dispensation of Divine grace, I will ever boast and glory, as the solace of my heart, as the security of my peace, and the stable foundation of all my best hopes.

According to this view of the Apostle's sentiments, it would be easy to illustrate the propriety of his resolution to "glory in the cross of Christ," or in the Christian dispensation, of which this doctrine is the great foundation, in preference to the Jewish œconomy, from a full conviction of the superior privileges and advantages which attend it. For, whether we consider the ancient dispensation in its moral appointments, in the nature of those rewards and punishments which it proposes,

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proposes, or in the intimations which it affords of forgiveness to those who fail in the complete performance of their duty, intimations so extremely necessary to support the exertions, which at best must be frail and imperfect, we shall find that it carries evident marks of weakness and infirmity, and, through its whole system, gives the clearest indications of its being only a temporary institution, appointed to introduce something far superior in dignity and perfection, and to give place to that which should be more beneficial in its effects, and more extensive in its influence. It was, accordingly, the uniform declaration of all the prophets, that "God would soon gather all nations
"and tongues, who should come and see
"his glory;" when he should "finish
"transgression, and make a full reconciliation for iniquity;" when "the Redeemer himself should come to Zion," to execute judgment in the earth, "to
"preach good tidings to the meek, and to
"bind up the broken heart." In general, it might easily be shewn, that the Jewish dispensation never made any thing entirely

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tirely perfect, till the bringing in of a better hope did. Christianity is the shining light which succeeded that morning dawn, the effulgent splendour of the latter house, which dispelled all its shadows; that better thing to come, of which the former system was only typical and figurative. Destitute of all external glare, it makes indeed no warm addresses to our passions; but, simple and unadorned, it wears the intrinsic characters of grace and truth, and claims the regard and affection of the heart by its inward worth and goodness; giving the endearing discovery of mercy to our guilty fears; pouring the cheerful rays of light around all the intricate and perplexed paths of life, and opening up all the treasures of heaven, and all the miseries of hell, to excite to virtue, and to deter from sin.

The sentiments expressed by the Apostle in the text, are proper to be adopted by Christians in every age. In the following discourse, therefore, I shall endeavour to shew, in the first place, how much reason we have to prefer the cross of Christ to every source of present pleasure or profit;

profit; and then proceed to consider the practical influence of the doctrine of the cross, to crucify the world to us, and us to the world,

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In the first place, then, I shall endeavour to shew, what reason we have to prefer the cross of Christ to every source of present pleasure or profit.

To secure those good things of this life, which tend to our felicity and ease, ought, indeed, to occupy a part of our attention. But it is seldom necessary to put mankind in mind of this; our error commonly lies on the other side; and what was intended to constitute a part of our happiness, is generally found to be the only object on which we rest the whole; on which we fix the foundation of our joy and triumph. But does not daily experience convince us of the folly of such a conduct? Can these beloved goods, in their utmost profusion, afford any relief to the distresses of the mind, or calm the just and reasonable fears arising from the apprehensions of the wrath of that righteous Judge, whose honour we have violated, and whose justice we have enraged?

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Do they not always raise and inflame, without satisfying the desires of the heart? Are they not, at best, but the gaudy delusions of a single moment, often making to themselves wings and flying away; retiring from our firmest hold by strange and unaccountable accidents, and forsaking us finally at that awful period, which God hath appointed to close the scene of all mortal pursuits, and terminate every scheme of human vanity? It is evidently the cross of Christ which forms our only real glory, and which possesses benefits infinitely superior to all the boasted charms of pomp, of wealth, and of ambition. The satisfaction offered there to the justice of God, is a transaction which fills the pious mind with wonder and delight; which it contemplates as the chief source of its joy, as capable of alleviating and silencing all its fears, and of speaking peace to the penitent and afflicted spirit.

To inflame our hearts with joy, with gratitude, and triumph, let us attend a little to the great and invaluable importance of those sacred blessings which we
derive

derive from the cross of Christ. God made man at first upright. But by revolting from our great Lawgiver, by the consequent depravity of the human heart, and by the numerous corruptions of the life, we became enemies to God, and the children of his wrath, exposed to the vengeance of his Omnipotent arm. Hence a satisfaction to the Divine justice appeared absolutely necessary; but where could such a satisfaction be found, adequate to the demerit of a guilty world? It must have occurred to the mind of man, that the sacrifices, which, by the appointment of the Deity himself, constituted an essential part of the Jewish dispensation, bore no sort of proportion to the guilt of that people; and, while their notions of the great atonement to which those sacrifices had a reference were dark and obscure, they must have administered but a weak foundation of confidence in the mercy of God. In this situation, behold the everlasting God employing the counsels of eternal wisdom, to vindicate the order of his government, and at the same time to save those rebellious subjects
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who had infringed it! A sacrifice is provided, of such infinite efficacy and dignity, as to contain an ample equivalent for the demerit of sin, in the sacred person of the Son of God, who, from the heights of glory which he enjoyed with the Father before the world was, becomes a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; treads the wine-press of his Father's wrath; travels in the greatness of his strength, through all the most arduous labours of love, till he was able to say, "It is finished;" the great and glorious scheme of redemption is completed; the justice of God is satisfied, and the foundation is laid for the eternal peace and happiness of mankind. Thus were we redeemed, not with corruptible things, as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, who was foreordained before the foundation of the world, and who offered himself up without spot or blemish unto God. He who knew no sin was made sin for us, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us unto God. He bore our griefs, and carried our sor-

rows,

rows, for the Lord laid upon him the iniquities of us all.

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Let us view the cross of Christ, and attend to the numerous glories with which it is encircled; it will appear to be the pleasure, the delight of God; the amazement and wonder of the holy angels: A sight, offensive perhaps to the dull and carnal mind; but to the eye of faith, the most illustrious and splendid object that ever was beheld in this lower world. There is displayed, in the most striking colours, the incomprehensible wisdom of God, in the adorable contrivance to unite the demands of justice with the calls of mercy. There the glorious Captain of our salvation exhibits his invincible power, in overcoming all the enemies of our spiritual felicity. There he gives the most authentic testimony of his infinite love. There he appeases the wrath of his Father, fulfils the law of God, destroys the sentence of condemnation that was against us, atones for our guilt, and gains for us a complete redemption.

Let our meditations proceed to contemplate this Prince of life bursting gloriously

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riously from the tomb, loaded with the spoils of the grave, gaining the hard and difficult conquest over the powers of darkness, of death, and of hell. Behold him ascending on high, leading captivity captive, and let thy soul rise, upon the wings of faith, above that cloud which received him from the world. View him in the superior regions, no longer the man of sorrows, but the Lord of glory, invested with all power and supreme dignity in these heavenly places. Reflect upon those beneficial purposes which he now pursues at the right hand of God. By his appearance in the presence of the Most High for us, we have access at all times to the throne of Grace, by that new and living way which he has consecrated through the vail of his flesh. Though now deprived of his bodily presence, he has not left us benighted or forlorn. His ministering spirit perpetually guards the persons, and watches over the interests of his disciples. From on high he reveals and urges upon the Christian's attentive and enraptured ear, those ravishing consolations of his love, communicated

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nicated of old by the prophets: "Thus
 "faith the Lord who created thee, O
 "Israel! and he that formed thee, O Ja-
 "cob! fear not for I have redeemed
 "thee; I have called thee by thy name,
 "thou art mine. When thou passest
 "through the waters I will be with thee,
 "and through the rivers they shall not
 "overflow thee; when thou walkest
 "through the fire thou shalt not be burn-
 "ed, neither shall the flames kindle upon
 "thee."—"Can a woman forget her
 "sucking child, that she should not have
 "compassion on the fruit of her womb?
 "Yea, she may forget; yet will I not for-
 "get thee. Behold I have graven thee
 "upon the palms of mine hands."—"For
 "a small moment may I forsake thee, but
 "with great mercies will I gather thee.
 "In a little wrath I may hide my face
 "from thee for a moment, but with ever-
 "lasting kindness will I have mercy upon
 "thee, faith the Lord thy Redeemer*."

Anticipate in thy thoughts the grand
 completion of all his mediatorial offices,
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* Isa. xliii. 1. &c. Isa. xlix. 15, 16. Isa. liv. 7. 8.

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in the unchangeable happiness of his servants. By virtue of his voluntary humiliation and sufferings, he is qualified, to enrich them with all the fulness of God, and is employed in preparing and furnishing a place in the celestial abodes for all his zealous and stedfast disciples. Reflect on that glorious period, when this invisible Saviour, who once stooped so low for the interest of his Church, and who now continues to exercise so tender a care and concern over his faithful followers, shall come again, in splendour, pomp, and majesty, to receive them unto himself; to conduct them from this state of pain and calamity to Zion, to the holy city, there to dwell for ever in the courts of God, and to inquire through eternity into the beauties of the heavenly Jerusalem.

What a prodigy then of bliss is the cross of Christ! the source of all those precious benefits, which fill the soul with joy and peace in believing. It is the cross of Christ, which breaks the heavy cloud that rests upon the mind of man, damping the powers of his soul, and checking his ambition to reach those great rewards, which
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he was conscious he could never of himself deserve. It is the cross of Christ, which rears the dejected, the drooping heart, and pours the oil of joy into the mourning spirit. It is the cross of Christ, which lifts up the hands that hang down, and strengthens the feeble knees. It is the cross of Christ, which emboldens the heart of man to contemplate the face of God, as a propitious Judge, as a merciful Parent, who, with a complacent smile, invites his children to his presence. It is the cross of Christ, which raises the eye of the mind from every vain and sordid pursuit, which enlarges its sight, and points to heaven, whose high rewards, it assures us, are now attainable in consequence of the meritorious sacrifice which it bore. Is there, then, in all the compass of human pursuits, one good to be found, that can afford so solid a foundation of triumph and rejoicing, as the cross of Christ? As far as east is distant from the west, as far as heaven is high above the earth, as far as eternity exceeds a momentary duration, so far does this great object outshine and eclipse the glories

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glories of every other that can be named in comparison with it. Let the rich man glory in his riches ; let the mighty man glory in his might ; let the wise man glory in his wisdom ; but he that glories aright, will glory in this, that he knows Jesus, and him crucified. Whatever unfavourable notions a carnal mind may entertain of the cross of Christ, though to the Jew it may be a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness, yet to the humble and pious mind, it is the power and the wisdom of God. To the soul labouring under the sense of guilt, and alarmed with the reasonable fear of its deserved punishment, precious and acceptable will appear the saying, that Jesus came into the world to save sinners, to purify them from the defilement, and to protect them against the awful consequences of sin. To the mind that feels its inward disorders, welcome will be the skilful physician, who comes to heal the diseases, and to cure the numerous plagues of the heart.

Let us proceed, as was proposed in the second place, to consider the practical influence of the doctrine of the cross, to
crucify

crucify us unto the world, and the world
unto us.

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It was the great design and tendency of all the doctrines of Christ to purify the heart. For this end, the Son of God was manifested in the flesh,—for this he lived, for this he died. How well suited is this event to inspire the heart with the deepest hatred and abhorrence of sin? Follow the Redeemer through all the paths of an afflicted and miserable life; trace him particularly in those steps which led to the awful accomplishment of his sufferings; contemplate him fastened to the cross, bearing the insults of men, sustaining the weight of divine wrath, hanging upon his wounds, racked and torn with torture, and say what an evil and bitter thing that must be, for which the Son of God himself thus bled and expired in agony. Ours, however, was the guilt that raised the Saviour's cross, that nailed him to the accursed tree, and made his soul so exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. And sure none can approve himself the true friend of this suffering Jesus, without crucifying those lusts and corrupt passions, which were the true cause of his sorrow;

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and by indulging which, we are said to renew his afflictions; to crucify the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame; to do despite unto the spirit of grace; and to trample under foot the blood of the covenant as an unholy thing.

But more particularly, in the second place: The cross of Christ is of most powerful efficacy to bear down our pride, to create an humble condescension of mind, and an entire complacence in the most rigorous conditions of duty. There we see the Heir of all things made of no reputation; the Prince of Life devoted to death. After so illustrious an example, what heart shall swell with arrogance, what head shall rear itself with pride? Shall not the mind of the Christian be reconciled to sufferings, which, he knows, are a part of the constitution of divine grace, and the means which the wisdom of God hath appointed to render him like to his divine and heavenly Master; which put the sincerity of his faith to the proper trial, promote his sanctification, and, by disengaging him from this earth, increase his longing for, and relish of heaven. How

reasonable

reasonable indeed is it, that the members should thus be conformed to their Head; that the disciples should walk in the steps of their Master; that the soldiers should follow where their General leads? It was by affliction that the great Captain of our salvation was made perfect; and, can his disciples expect to reach that height of dignity through the easy paths of luxury and pleasure? Is the disciple above his Master, or the servant above his Lord?

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In the third place: This important doctrine of the cross of Christ, ought to crucify and deaden all extravagant admiration of the things of this world, and to produce that heavenly-mindedness, which may preserve the soul from the influence of those allurements, those common temptations, by which men are led aside from the path of duty. He, who came to save his people from the power of sin, wisely considered it as of eternal importance to teach them, by his example, the vanity and worthlessness of the present state, in comparison with the recompense of an unseen and spiritual felicity. The lot which he possessed in life was of his own

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choosing. How little did he enjoy, how little did he wish to enjoy, of the honours of this vain world? He poured contempt upon its dignities and pleasures, and intended, by living and dying under the heaviest sufferings, to raise us above the influence of its temptations; to teach us to aspire after something intrinsically desirable and excellent; and to fix our souls upon the glory that shall be revealed. And shall not the Christian, who considers those unspeakable benefits which result from the sacrifice of Jesus upon the cross; who looks upon himself as a pilgrim and sojourner on earth, where he hath no continuing abode, but travelleth to those superior regions destined for his residence, his home, his habitation; shall he not view the dreams and shadows of happiness, which here rise before his sight, with much indifference, with the cool and passive regards of a stranger, and elevate his affection to that holy land where his felicity and joy dwell? Here we are all embarked for an unchangeable country, the passengers to an eternal world; and, while we sail down the ocean of time, shall we continually

continually strive to reach those empty bubbles which rise, and in a moment burst upon the surface, and lose the view of that precious diadem, which shines upon the sight, and awaits the head of the faithful? If ye be risen with Christ, set your affections on things above, and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.

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In the last place: The death of Christ should reconcile us to the thoughts of our own dissolution, and preserve us from any immoderate terrors at the last period. Death, when it is considered even in its most simple form, as an entire dissolution of all our present powers, as an annihilation and total extinction of our whole frame, is an object most ungrateful and shocking to nature. To become a prey to forgetfulness; to be as if we had never been; to leave for ever the cheerful light of day, and to descend into the dark and silent mansions of the grave, where, insensible to every comfort, we must moulder into dust, and be transformed into the same materials from which we at first arose, are no doubt thoughts at which nature must startle and recoil. But, when

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we consider this world in the light in which reason and Christianity assures us it ought to be considered, as only an inconsiderable part of our existence; as connected with another scene of being, which must last for ever; and every part of our present life as having a permanent influence on our everlasting condition; must not the consciousness of guilt dreadfully envenom the sting of death, and superadd fresh vigour to all our natural fears of decay and dissolution? There is a feeling within, which adheres closely to the heart, and which intimates eternity to man; which assures him, that, in a future period, the everlasting Judge of all the earth shall render unto every man according to the fruits of his doings. This feeling the most audacious sinner can never entirely suppress: In the midst of laughter his heart is sad, and the end of his mirth is heaviness of spirit: it intrudes itself upon his gayest scenes, and secretly mingles the gall of asps with his most bewitching draughts of pleasure.

Or, should he carefully study to expel these impressions from his mind, or, by perpetual

petual dissipation render them somewhat tolerable, yet the approach of death must at last collect his scattered attention, and carry them home to his heart in all their bitterness. In vain shall we attempt to describe the misery of a sinner, who lies on the brink of an eternal world with the possession of his senses. His wretchedness must exceed all powers of description. Indeed, the very best of men cannot divest themselves of every uneasiness at the prospect of this event. This world is a scene of frailty and infirmity, where there is not, there cannot be, any such thing as a full and complete obedience to the will of heaven. The most perfect do err, and are sensible that many secret blemishes cleave to their highest attainments. The consciousness of such failings and infirmities furnishes a multitude of severe and bitter reflections, and raises those dark clouds which often disturb the peace of their minds. From that genuine modesty, and humble diffidence, which mark his character, the pious Christian is ready to exclaim, How shall I appear before the great God and Father of all ! How shall

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a frail and imperfect creature stand in the presence of Him, who is light and perfection itself! How shall I answer him when he enters into judgment with me! What of myself can I plead to procure his favour, or to avert his wrath! Under all such desponding thoughts, how blessed are the consolations which refresh the spirit of the dying Christian! Conscious, as he is, that in many things he hath offended and come short of the glory of God, how doth his soul magnify the Lord, and his spirit rejoice in God his Saviour, who hath opened up a fountain to the house of David, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness. Deriving hence the humble hope of the forgiveness of all his sins, and of the gracious smiles of his Creator, he riseth superior to the fear of death, whom he considers as no stern and inexorable tyrant sent to execute the vengeance of Heaven, but as the messenger of peace and joy, to usher him into his Father's presence, into the regions of unfading bliss.

Upon the whole: Do we then wish to live in peace, and to die in joy? Remember,
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it is not merely by an indolent wish that this can be accomplished. Nothing but a vigorous faith in the merits of that sacrifice which was offered up on the cross, together with real, sound, and practical holiness, derived from this its proper principle, can lead to self-complacence through life, and to serenity and triumph at the hour of death. A firm trust in God, through Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the atonement, and a comfortable expectation of a happy futurity, formed by a life of integrity and goodness, will enable us to retire from the theatre of this life with applause and honour; to resign our spirits with joy into the hands of our Redeemer; and to repose ourselves on the bosom of our Father and our God.

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S E R M O N XV.

ON PEACE.

ROM. xiv. 19.

*Let us therefore follow after the things which
make for peace.*

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THESE words were originally occasioned by an unhappy variance which had arisen in the Christian church. They are intimately connected with the seventeenth verse of this chapter, and contain an earnest repetition of the Apostle's exhortation to the exercise of that unanimity and peace, which he laboured to establish among the followers of Jesus. As
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this is a duty of the highest consequence to our present and everlasting interests, it certainly deserves our most serious attention.

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I shall endeavour, therefore, in the first place, to enforce the admonition in the text, by pointing out the important obligations which lie upon us to cultivate this amiable temper: And, in the second place, shall suggest some advices, by which we may be assisted in preserving and cherishing it.

The first view of our obligation to this duty shall be taken from the advantage and pleasure which must always accompany the practice of it. When we consider the general course of human life, we are immediately led to observe, that mankind too seldom appear to form their conduct, either by the dictates of reason, or the light of revelation. How few are there who give themselves the trouble of inquiring, with any tolerable care, what may be most truly subservient to their highest interests, or most effectual for enabling them to pass through life with peace of mind, and with the approbation of God and man? We are conscious that
there

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there is a spring and energy within the mind, which never suffers us to be totally at rest. Happy, indeed, were it for the interests of human nature, did this principle continually impel us to what is excellent and praise-worthy. But to what a variety of impertinent purposes is it generally directed? and what reason is there to bewail the unfortunate choice into which men are commonly misled? How many turn the whole force of their attention to unprofitable pursuits, or apply themselves, with the utmost vigour and intenseness of mind, to reach what may procure them some external and deceitful importance, while they scarcely ever employ their thoughts about the art of becoming truly wise, of correcting those inward maladies which lay the foundation of uneasiness and distress, and of acquiring those generous qualities which may render them amiable in the sight of God, and agreeable and useful to their brethren of mankind?

Would men be persuaded to withdraw their attention for a little from those foreign views with which they are so much occupied, and listen with calmness

ness to the domestic admonitions of conscience, they would soon discover, that all the pursuits prohibited by religion are utterly inconsistent with their happiness in this life; and that the course of conduct which it points out, contributes more to temporal felicity than all the objects which our ambition or vanity urge us to pursue with such amazing ardour. But the suffrage of conscience, in favour of Christian duty, is in no instance stronger than in regard to that unanimity and peace which the text recommends, and which, in every view, must be considered as the most effectual means of acquiring private and personal happiness. For, is it not the fairest gift of heaven, the generous sweetener of all earthly blessings, bestowing on them, wherever it is present, that relish and flavour, which it is not in the power of all the possessions of life to give; but wherever it is absent, the most lavish draughts of affluence and temporal delights must be sour and unpalatable, and mixed with all the gall of bitterness. Good and pleasant, happy and joyous beyond expression, must be that intercourse
which

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which is carried on with friendship, affection and confidence, where there are no wayward passions, anxieties and fears, to interrupt the tranquillity of the heart. A delightful serenity and composure must be the perpetual portion of the man in whose mind these amiable qualities reside. He harbours no wrong designs against others ; he therefore has no reason to apprehend any malicious contrivances against himself. That real friendship, which he discovers towards his brethren, is entitled to the returns of reciprocal love, and must gain the affections of every heart. While he thinketh no evil, while he rejoiceth not in iniquity, but in doing good to all, his enemies must be extremely few ; for, even bad, as the world may be thought, rare, we will venture to say, are the examples of men so totally lost to every sentiment of virtue, as to attempt to disturb the happiness of one who, instead of giving them any ground of offence, discovers a heart that overflows with the sincerest love, and aims at nothing so much as promoting the good of all. On the contrary, by such acts of beneficence,

beneficence, he must at last conquer the most obstinate and perverse heart; and by continuing to exercise forbearance and kindness towards those who are disaffected to him, he effectually overcomes their evil with his good.

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Observe, on the other hand, the infelicity of the opposite character. Reflect on the situation of that man who delights in enmity and discord. Doth he not perpetually carry his own tormentor within his breast? Well doth Solomon observe, that “the merciful and peaceable man doth good to his own soul; but he that is wrathful troubleth his own flesh.” He is disturbed by jealousy, solicitude, anxieties and envy, and perpetually feels all that train of solid and substantial evils, which arise from the dominion of the most infernal passions. Such a state of mind comes the nearest, that we can well imagine at present, to the torments of those fierce and rebellious spirits who are shut up in the blackness of darkness, in those prisons of everlasting vengeance, where nothing is to be heard but gnashing of teeth, and all the howlings of wrath, and fury, and horrible discord. Indeed, such

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such unhallowed dispositions will always be found to render their possessor truly miserable. No sooner do these stormy passions, which interrupted the peace of others, subside for a little, than he appears spiritless, dejected, and disconsolate, and must resign himself to a melancholy train of cooler thoughts. Reason, which was before overwhelmed amidst the hurricane of passions, now interposes, and must be heard; sets before him the lively picture of his guilt, and presents him with the severest remonstrances against his conduct. It is beautifully remarked by Solomon, that "he who hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city broken down and without walls." Destitute of the necessary defence of reason and of judgment, every frivolous and impertinent trifle finds him an easy and unresisting conquest. Led captive by his passions at their will, he is transported into a fury, and hurried into extravagancies which render him ridiculous to every cool observer, and lay the foundations of sad repentance, and of dire remorse, in his calmer hours. Thus are all his cool and sober seasons

seasons of reflection no better than the lucid intervals of a real madman, which serve only to give the clearer discoveries of his distemper and misery.

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In the second place, Our obligation to this duty arises from the precepts, and from the whole tenor of that religion which we profess. Who does not immediately see that the fierceness of passion, and all the unhallowed instruments of discord, are perfectly unchristian, and stand in direct opposition to the mild spirit of revelation? It would be endless to mention those many laws which prohibit all malice, bitterness, and variance; which enjoin forbearance and every species of brotherly love. Is it not the evident strain, is it not the chief intention of the whole system of Christianity to inspire, above all things, peace, and tenderness, and mutual respect, and every virtue that can make society pleasant, and our intercourse with one another agreeable? Observe the character, trace the conduct of the great, the divine Founder of this religion. Did he not exemplify all its laws? Did he not fully display its genuine spirit in every
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step of his pilgrimage? That mighty Prince of Life came not to shake the kingdoms, to ravage the earth, to make the world a wilderness. He came adorned with intrinsic glory, to put his subjects in possession of the most substantial blessings, by soothing the turbulence of every rude passion, by composing the world to peace and rest. "In his days," it was foretold, "righteousness shall flourish, and abundance of peace upon the earth." What, then, can we think of those who are under the government of fierce and turbulent passions, the disturbers of their own and of the world's repose, and who still scruple not to call themselves Christians, and lay claim to the favours of divine grace. Alas! such "know not what manner of spirit they are of." Surely they are utter strangers to the spirit and temper of Him whose name they bear, who provoked no reasonable wrath or passion; but, meek and gentle, mild and patient, lived the completest pattern of tender compassion and of peaceful love. They can be no friends to his religion; for the whole weight

weight of that religion is pointed against such a character. They cannot be the children of God; for he is the God of love, and the Father of peace. "They are of their father the devil, for the works of their father, these they do."

In the third place, A most powerful obligation lies upon us to the pursuit of unanimity and peace, from its being necessary to prepare us for joining the great fraternity of happy spirits above. We are sent into this world as a school of discipline, and we appear in this state under the great and venerable character of candidates for eternity. Short and transitory is the appearance we are destined to make; and nothing, surely, can be considered, in the estimation of reason, as worthy of any great attention, but what has some influence upon the final result of our present state of existence, and may improve those virtuous affections of the heart, which are appointed to live for ever. In those mild and gentle regions, there is no war nor rumour of war. How then can variance and strife ever be the proper education for such a state? Be as-

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fured that no fierce rebellious soul, no spirit that is not tamed and formed according to the humanity of the Gospel, shall ever appear there, to disturb the tranquillity, the sacred order of that heavenly kingdom, but shall be thrust down to dwell with its kindred spirits, far from the face of God, and from the joys of his presence.

We now proceed, as was proposed, to suggest a few advices, by which we may be enabled to preserve and cherish this amiable temper.

In the first place, then, let us frequently reflect upon the nature of this world in which we live, and the present situation of that society with which we are appointed to mingle and converse. Who, that knows any thing of the nature of this world, will imagine it possible to find perfection in a society that is composed of men? What folly and weakness must it imply to be much surpris'd at the appearance of different sentiments, of defects, or errors, or vices, in this imperfect scene of things? These every wise man will naturally expect, and study to
prepare

prepare himself for them. Mankind are a mixed society, composed of very different characters. We must converse with them as they are; and whosoever desires to enjoy the benefits which flow from their society, must be prepared to endure, with calmness and composure, the inconveniences resulting from his intercourse with them.

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In the second place, it will certainly be subservient to this salutary purpose, to moderate our attention to selfish views, or private interest. The subjects of human complaint and murmurings are many and various, and multiplied to an amazing degree by that man, whose heart is entirely ingrossed by narrow and sordid attachments. The selfish soul is ever full of jealousy, and violently agitated by the least appearance of encroachment upon its interest. It is true, indeed, that however valuable the possession of peace is, and however pleasant the enjoyments which flow from the preservation of unity and concord, there may be cases, in which the attainment of these is inconsistent with our duty; and dear must be the

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purchase, indeed, if they are attained by the loss of the favour of God, or by the sacrifice of any thing that is essential to truth, to honour, and to virtue. For our attention to this object is not to be supposed to extend so far, as to deprive the mind of a manly spirit and sensibility, to render it so tame and unfeeling, as to submit to those injuries and ravages, which may be committed by the hand of wantonness, injustice, or oppression. But still it will be allowed, that if benevolence is the habitual temper of the mind, and if the heart is not devoured by greedy desires, we will be disposed, amidst every competition about present interests, rather to recede a little from what may be reckoned our just pretensions, than, for the sake of a trifling inconsiderable matter, to involve ourselves in those violent ferments, which inflame many angry passions, and lay the foundation of deep and lasting animosities. "Behold," says Solomon, "how great a fire a little spark kindleth !" and "the beginning of strife is like the letting out of water."

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In the third place. It will be most useful, for this purpose, to subdue our pride, and to acquire the precious grace of Christian humility. We are appointed to sojourn in a world abundantly unreasonable and capricious. The meekest and the best of men cannot please all the world. The best of men may expect to have some share of offences, or of bad treatment. These offences fall with double violence upon the proud and conceited man. For pride is a passion extremely vexatious and troublesome to the soul that is possessed of it; nice, delicate, and squeamish to the last degree, subjecting its votary to a thousand different mortifications, and putting it into the power of every trifling accident that occurs, to throw him into confusion, perplexity, and distress of mind. By every injury, however trivial, he is affronted, his self-love is deeply hurt, his pride is immediately up in arms, and all is in furious disorder within. But the humble man, as he has proper views of the weakness of the world, will more easily suffer what he expected as the consequence of hu-

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man infirmity; and as he has been accustomed to form a moderate estimate of his own merit, it is natural to think he will be the less affected by those slight offences, which so grievously irritate the spirit of others.

In the fourth place, let us, for these purposes, earnestly labour to attain peace of conscience, and peace with God, which we know is only to be reached by a conscientious adherence to all the branches of his good and acceptable will. The wicked man must be at perpetual variance with himself; and being full of inward disgust, will be continually fretful and dissatisfied with every object around him: While the good man, reconciled to his own heart, and in favour with his God, can know none of that peevishness, which results from the reproaches of the mind, and, being furnished with an established tranquillity within, must always possess that calmness of temper, and sweetness of disposition, which will be so far from breaking in upon the repose of others, that it will recommend him to the esteem and affections of all around.

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In the last place, let us, by earnest and fervent prayer, address ourselves to the God and Father of our spirits, beseeching him that we may be enabled to delight in all those exercises of peace and meekness, which are so well calculated to lighten the burdens, and enhance the joys of this present life, and to form the most excellent preparation for the enjoyment of that state of full tranquillity and rest, of which the greatest happiness here below is but an imperfect foretaste.

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S E R M O N XVI.

ON CHRISTIAN HOPE AND PATIENCE.

ROMANS xii. 12.

Rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation.

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NEVER, surely, was any asperſion more injurious, than to call religion an unpleaſant ſervice; to repreſent it as covered with gloom and terrors, or as at variance in any degree with the happineſs of men. Such an opinion can reſide only in that mind, which hath no knowledge at all of the nature of that ſervice, and which, by conſequence, never felt the power and effects of it. They
who

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who know it best will be forward to bear this honourable testimony, that so far from lessening the stores of natural pleasures, it is this alone which can give them their proper relish and flavour, and which bestows solidity upon all the common enjoyments of life, by adding that inward peace and joy which strangers intermeddle not with. The religion of Jesus not only has allowed us, but makes it a necessary part of Christian duty, to cherish and cultivate this affection of joy, as that which flows from it by the most direct and natural consequence; a consequence most honourable to its Author, most agreeable and pleasant to ourselves, and most favourable to the character of that religion which we profess.

The words we have now read comprehend two great duties of Christian practice, which, as they have a strong and intimate connection with each other, I shall endeavour at this time to illustrate and enforce.

The first duty enjoined by the Apostle in our text, is rejoicing in hope; and in order

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order to explain and enforce it, I shall consider the nature and foundation of the Christian's joy.

Hope, like all the other feelings and affections of the mind, was formed for the wisest and most excellent purposes. It is the most generous of all the principles, bestowed upon man by the friendly hand of God. It soothes the cares of life; allays the anguish of the perplexed heart; rouses and animates it to great and worthy deeds. It is the noble medicine of nature in distress, which exhilarates the spirits; which pours forth a gleam of joy beneath the heavy cloud of sorrow; which urges the mind to lift its eye from poring upon its distress, to look forward to better days, and to borrow some sweets from the funds of futurity to mitigate the bitterness of present grief. How delicate and pleasant are the sensations which attend its exertions. They are accompanied with that species of delight, which it is above the power of language to describe, and which is only to be felt. Many and various are the objects which have been selected for the exercise of it, according

according to the infinite variety which is to be met with in the character, the complexion, the tempers of men. The affluence of life, the gaudy trappings of ambition, the smiling scenes of pleasure, do each awaken and kindle the sparks of this inward affection.

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But it is observable, it is a well attested and mortifying truth, that when the object of this hope is the gratification of some unworthy passion, or the acquisition of some earthly good, it is generally disappointed in its aim, and never reaches that high pleasure which it was made to believe was to be found in the possession. It is founded, in such cases, on probability alone; and, how weak is probability when calculated by a creature so short-sighted, so feeble and undiscerning in his views, and so totally ignorant of that concealed train of accidents, any one of which is sufficient to blast the best concerted scheme of human policy? How often have we seen the towering edifices reared by the industrious arm of hope, the monuments of much pleasing labour, and which seemed to stand abundantly secure upon the foundation

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dation of the strongest and most natural probability, suddenly undermined by some secret unforeseen assault, and all their comely proportions totter and fall to the ground? In short, all the agreeable anticipations of men are but so many ideal castles, subject to the perpetual caprice of accidents, which no discernment, no power, can possibly regulate or controul. They are like the transient beauties of the rainbow, or those fantastic shapes in the clouds which flit in a moment, and which are discomposed and changed into a different form by the smallest breath of air. In proportion as the imagination is warm and vigorous, and reason, for want of being ripened by experience, incapable of correcting its fond extravagancies, in proportion are we found to suffer from the delusions of hope, when directed to temporal attainments. Then it is that future views appear arrayed with much glory; we bring near, we lay hold, as it were, upon the stores which are revealed, without one thought of intervening difficulties, or latent danger to steal away the enchanting prospect. Or, if we should, after

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after all, reach the much admired abodes of joy; yet how often does the object, which, when viewed afar off, appeared so charming and delightful, under our very grasp assume a form far different from its distant appearance; the colour is coarse, the features are rude, and we are ready to conclude, that some distorted and irregular form has been maliciously substituted in the room of the amiable figure which captivated the soul. There we immediately discern so many defects, such a crowd of disagreeable circumstances, every one of which, in the heat and hurry of its expectation, the mind had totally overlooked, that instead of being pleased with the acquisition we have got, we are soured and chagrined; we reproach ourselves for being cheated by our passions; we stand accused of a foolish credulity, in listening to the language of a lying impostor.

It is the experience of those repeated and dreadful disappointments, which extinguishes the fire of the soul, which checks every future pleasant excursion, and which, by consequence, renders the hope

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hope which terminates in earthly bliss, a most frail and imperfect foundation of rejoicing.

When, therefore, we are exhorted to rejoice in hope, the Apostle undoubtedly means the hope of future spiritual good, the best and noblest exercise of the most generous affections; the source of the most animating and delightful consolation. This is the hope which maketh not ashamed. By this the soul of man wings its flight above the earth, and is wafted up into the third heaven, to hear, by faith, some of those unspeakable words, which it is not possible for a man to express. In the exercise of this spiritual hope, its spring is not clogged, nor its ardour cooled by fear of disappointment; its dependence is upon God, whose word is steadfast and inflexible, and whose faithfulness is like the strong mountains. The faithful Christian knows assuredly that as the Lord liveth, and as his soul liveth, his most ardent desires shall be completely gratified, and his hope swallowed up at last in the fruition of that unchangeable
bliss,

bliss, which it far surpasses his present imperfect faculties fully to comprehend.

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To this lively hope are all good men begotten again. The delights which they now feel in the ways of God are to them the earnest, the foretaste of far higher joys; the silent intimations of the future favour of God; the secret consciousness of immortality; the anticipation of the riches of the divine munificence; the dawning of that eternal day, whose sun shall be overcast by no cloud, shall be succeeded by no night; when they shall see the great original of moral excellence; the fountain of light and life as he is, and in his light shall see light; and when with deep insatiable delight they shall drink of that perennial spring of pleasure which gladdens and rejoices all the city of the living God. With rapture may the pious soul continually exult in the hope of the glory of God. Borne upon the wings of faith, thou mayest rise far above this world, and penetrate into the hidden glories of immortality: as thou risest, this world will gradually lessen to thy view: from thence, as from a mighty eminence,

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thou mayest cast an eye upon this inconsiderable spot of earth, and pity the ignoble spirits which grovel upon its surface; the sons of vanity, the sport of passion. O suffer not this world, with all its frail and withering honours, ever to swell so big in thy sight, as to intercept the glories of the world beyond it; but often shifting aside the passing scene, contemplate the happy day afar off, and rejoice: Afar off we should not say; for after a very few steps more upon the theatre of life, this earthly house of thy tabernacle shall be dissolved, and its immortal inhabitant, liberated from its present prison, shall return to its native region, to its congenial joys.

But farther, it is evident that this rejoicing, which is founded upon the hope of the glory of God, is not the indiscriminate lot of all men. It is appropriated and peculiar to the pious alone. None but these can have a title to such blessedness. A wicked and corrupted man is indisposed, from the very nature of his character, for entering upon this holy and immortal inheritance. He can have no
title

title to the actual possession of a thing for which he is not in the least prepared, and by consequence can have no right to rejoice in the hope of that, to the enjoyment of which his own inherent impurity shall prove a natural and an eternal obstacle. He must remain without hope, being without God in the world. And, can imagination draw to itself a picture of more substantial wretchedness than this? Of all men living he must be the most miserable; flung out into the wilderness of life; deserted by the friendly arm of God, and encompassed with a thousand instruments of misery, where can he expect to find a safe retreat? In the day of his adversity, to what good hand can he apply for relief; to what kind heart can he disclose the sorrows of his soul? The prayer of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord: "Because he has called, and
" the sinner refused, stretched out his hand,
" and he regarded it not, but set at nought
" all his counsel, and would have none of
" his reproof, therefore he laughs at his calamity; he mocks when his fear cometh,
" when his fear cometh as desolation, and
" destruction

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“destruction as an whirlwind. Then he
“may call upon God, but he will not an-
“swer; he may seek him early, but shall
“not find him.” Thus is he sunk and bro-
ken with the weight of present calamity,
which he is not able to soothe by the hope
of future good. One dark and dismal
cloud rests perpetually upon his soul,
through which no ray of light or comfort
is ever seen to penetrate; and after ha-
ving passed through a life of despondency
and gloom, he must expect to feel his ago-
ny heightened into all the wildness of the
most horrible despair, when he approaches
to the confines of the eternal world, where
all the impenitent “shall be cast into
“hell, and all the people that forget their
“God. He dieth in the bitterness of his
“soul; the terrors of the Lord take hold
“on him as waters; a tempest stealeth
“him away in the night; a storm hurleth
“him out of his place; he is driven from
“light into darkness, and hissed out of
“the world; he hath no name in the
“street, and his remembrance perisheth
“from off the earth. Such is the portion
“of

“ of the wicked, and this the heritage ap-
 “ pointed him by God.”

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The truth is, and may the great Father of the spirits of all flesh impress this truth upon our hearts, in full and indelible characters, that real and substantial virtue, sound and heart-felt piety, is the only basis on which we can found our hope of the glory of God. Mistake me not; I mean not in the way of merit: I mean, however, that this is the grand condition established by the express and irrevocable appointment of Almighty God; and he that builds upon another bottom, “ his
 “ trust shall be cut off; his hope shall be
 “ the spider’s web; he may lean upon his
 “ house, but it shall not stand; he may
 “ hold it fast, but it shall not endure.” Integrity and goodness was the path which Christ invariably trode to heaven. Integrity and goodness is the only avenue he has pointed out to those celestial seats; and it is written by the hand of the Redeemer himself, over the gate of the Zion above, “ Not every one that saith unto
 “ me Lord, Lord, shall enter into the
 “ kingdom of heaven, but he that doth

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“ the will of my Father which is in heaven.” This is a state where the blessed inhabitants are enraptured with the grand contemplation of the infinite excellence of God, and glowing with the flames of divine love, rejoice to do the will of their Father. They only, therefore, who possess in some degree the same sentiments and feelings, are allowed to exult in the hope of this precious possession. They indeed whose hearts are animated with unfeigned love to God, and to their Redeemer, and with an inseparable attachment to truth, to righteousness and charity, may and ought to rejoice in this blessed expectation: Assured of the soundness of their hearts, and of their sincerity in the covenant of God, though accompanied with many of those frailties which are the unavoidable effects of human infirmity, such a consciousness ought to inspire them with a sacred joy and triumph. In such a pious character, melancholy is a great misfortune; nay it is a blemish, it is a fault. Ill does it become the candidates for glory, the expectants of immortal felicity, to wear a cloud upon the countenance:

countenance: it is a dishonour to religion itself. To them it belongs to give a favourable representation of the principles of piety, and to demonstrate to all the world, that the yoke of Christ is easy, and his burden light; that the ways of God are ways of pleasantness, and that all his paths are full of peace.

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In the second place: Another duty which the Apostle very naturally subjoins to this, is, patience in tribulation; a duty most vigorously cherished and strengthened by the exercise of that joyful hope which has already been mentioned and described. For surely the thickest clouds which all the wrath of man, and all the rage of persecution which malice can raise, are never able entirely to darken this glorious prospect of the Christian: the smallest rays emitted from whose divine joys are sufficient to reconcile the spirit to all the rigours and severities of obedience, to teach it to rejoice in adversity, to smile on agony and death itself. Shall the most grievous calamities of this mortal life greatly harass the man who is born the heir of an eternity of joy? Why be ex-

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travagantly alarmed at the malice which may deprive us of our external possessions, things which, as Christians, we are bound to consider as foreign to our highest interest, while it cannot take away from us the glorious kingdom, which it is the Father's will to give his patient flock? Why dread even that malice which may extend to the killing of the body? It can go no farther; the grave shall put a period to all hostilities; there the wicked cease from troubling.

Patience under the tribulations or distresses of life, whatever they may be, is indeed a most essential grace, which, however difficult it may be to carry to its highest exercise in this infant scene of being, yet, in a state of virtuous education, is absolutely necessary to be formed and cherished within the heart, as the most genuine growth of the Christian life, as fundamentally requisite to constitute, to denominate the Christian character, because it is so intimately, so invariably connected with all the principles from which the life and spirit of piety are derived. All religion is founded upon the persuasion

persuasion of the Providence of God, and the full belief of his continual protection and tender anxiety, exerted in the care of those who are devoted to his service. To them he stands in the most comfortable, the most honourable relation: their hearts are allotted by Providence to be the seats of that triumphant exultation, which flows from this most blessed conviction, that if there is any truth in the most certain principles of reason and revelation, their piety is favoured of heaven, they are at all times under the special charge and protection of the Almighty, under the guardianship of infinite wisdom. Light is indeed sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart. Since therefore the Lord reigneth, let the righteous rejoice, and those who are of a pure spirit shout for joy; for though he walk upon the wings of the wind, though he ride upon the whirlwind of storms and afflictions, they know the place of perfect safety. He is their hiding place, their refuge, and their fortress, and with confidence may they repose themselves under the impenetrable shade of his wings.

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Never indeed can we sufficiently labour to fix upon our minds the most favourable sentiments of the appointments of Providence, and of those most gracious purposes which all its corrections are intended to serve in our hearts; for the fatherly care, and tender anxiety of God, is visible in all those various methods by which he governs and preserves the fidelity of his servants. Often does he assume the air of severity and wrath, in kind compassion to our weakness and infirmities; to cure the disordered mind; to reduce it to sound and sober reason; and to recal our straying footsteps from the path of death.

Thus, adversity is not to be considered as the regular expression of the hatred and indignation of Almighty God, otherwise it would be hard indeed to vindicate the ways and dealings of God to men, since the best of men are born to trouble as the sparks fly upward. Human life is a chequered, a much diversified scene. Outward joy or distress are alternately dispensed, according as either may best promote the designs of their merciful and all-gracious

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gracious Author. The serene and cheerful field of prosperity, is sometimes in a moment obscured with clouds, and changed into a barren and frightful wilderness. The indulgent Father of the human race, by a sudden reverse of fortune, sometimes recalls the benefits which he had conferred, and lays afflictions upon the loins of men. But were we sufficiently acquainted with our own hearts, we should be often able to investigate the reason of that which we complain of as a cruel revolution. Was it not, perhaps, because we were become intoxicated with these blessings themselves, insensible of our dependance upon their giver, and even inattentive to the importance of those numerous mercies which surround us, and which, by being repeated, had become familiar and despised? They were withdrawn to teach us their value from their absence: the poison had begun to insinuate itself into thy soul: the all-skilful Physician administered the seasonable antidote which saved thy life.

In general: They who make the God of Jacob their hope and confidence, may
rest

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rest assured, that every event which falls to their lot is the best, upon the whole, for their particular situation, because it is distributed by one who must necessarily bestow his highest blessings upon those who are his favourites; but what those highest blessings are, whether poverty or riches, whether adversity or prosperity, it becomes us to leave to the determinations of that God, who judgeth not as man judges, and who allotes to his servants in this world, not what may appear most flattering to the eye of sense, but what he knows to be best suited to their particular necessities, and most beneficial to their truest interests. In this determination it is our duty to acquiesce; for what sober or well-regulated mind could wish for an happier situation, than to be under the conduct of one who knows his nature far better than he himself is able to do; who knows the nature and influence of all the objects here below upon the particular frame and temper of every individual heart; and who, in kind mercy, often withholds from us those dangerous goods, which might prove a curse to our souls?

“ How

“How happy are the people whose God
“is the Lord;” who are the subjects of
that kingdom whose Monarch is so in-
finitely wise and beneficent ! How blessed
are they who place their hope in that
eternal arm, “which made the heavens
“and the earth, and all that is therein;
“which keepeth truth for ever; which
“exerciseth judgment for the oppressed;
“which relieveth the fatherless and the
“widows; which giveth food unto the
“hungry; which is the salvation of the
“upright, the strength of the righteous,”
in all the seasons of distress and sorrow!

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S E R M O N XVII.

ON THE NATURE AND POWER OF FAITH.

Preached at the Celebration of the Sacrament of the
 LORD's Supper.



I JOHN V. 5.

*Who is he that overcometh the world, but he
 that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?*

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WE all know how much the Jews boasted of their title to the high character of the children of God, in consequence of the external advantages, and precious privileges, which they enjoyed. This Apostle had insinuated the insignificance of such a claim under the dispensation of Christianity. Their relation to
 God

God, of which they vaunted so much, would now avail them nothing, unless they should comply with the conditions prescribed by the Gospel; the most essential of which, for constituting their filial relation to God, was a vigorous principle of divine faith. All who heartily believed that Jesus was the Son of God, commissioned by him to execute the great purposes of human redemption, and who governed themselves according to the profession of such a belief, did alone deserve the name of the sons of God, were entitled, through Christ, to all the precious benefits resulting from the dispensation of grace, and should at last be admitted to all the ineffable felicities of their Father's house above, and rejoice for ever before his face. *Who is he that overcometh the world, but he that believeth that Jesus is the Son of God?* Who can be so nobly furnished for obtaining the victory over the temptations, the allurements, and the terrors of the world, as he who is possessed of this important persuasion? He feels a powerful principle within, which gives an elevation

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vation to his views, and a firmness and fortitude to his whole character.

In discoursing farther from these words, I propose,

First, To point out the nature, the foundation, and the character, of that Christian belief, to which such powerful operation is here attributed; and,
2d, To consider how suitable, and well adapted, such an instrument must be for rendering the mind triumphant over the world, for securing success to it in its pursuits of virtue, and for adorning it with all spiritual accomplishments.

First, With respect to the general notion of faith, it evidently denotes a firm persuasion of the mind concerning the truth and reality of any particular proposition, derived either from the suggestions of reason, or from proper testimony. All religious belief may, and undoubtedly ought to be, founded in the understanding, which must have its proper share in influencing the choice and approbation of the mind. Our own reason we can never
avoid

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avoid considering as the first channel through which God communicates to us notice or intimation of his will, of his character, and of his operations. It is the inspiration of the Almighty; it is the candle of the Lord. Weak, indeed, and feeble may be its light; and its discoveries may reach only to a narrow extent. But the imperfection of its reach can be no obstacle to its influence, with regard even to truths of that sublime and exalted kind which may naturally surpass its penetration, and escape its full comprehension, if, at the same time, they come attended with that striking and undeniable demonstration, which fixes and ascertains them to be the declarations of God.

When we speak of the foundations of Christian belief in particular cases, we know that it cannot be said, in strict propriety of language, that all the different branches of that divine system are capable of receiving proof from those external evidences, which demonstrate its general truth: for the great lines of natural religion, and the precepts of moral conduct, are, in some measure, deducible from ano-

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ther source. They may be investigated by the capacities of reason; and they possess a natural excellence, which approves itself to every mind. Yet we must maintain, that the evidences, internal and miraculous, which demonstrate the divine mission of its founder, do prove, by consequence, the truth of all those doctrines which he hath promulgated to the world; and do, at the same time, bestow an additional authority upon all those pious, and social, and personal offices of life, whose propriety is manifest from the light of nature, and which he hath confirmed and enforced by the laws of revelation.

In general, the best and warmest friends of this most amiable system will ever be forward to assert, that all the various evidences, which are adduced by Providence to establish its truth and divine origin, must undoubtedly be the objects of the understanding, and subjects of rational inquiry to those intelligent beings, who must be allowed, who are indeed commanded, to use the free, but modest and humble, exercise of the powers of their nature, as what can alone lay the foundation

tion of true religion, of manly devotion, of a reasonable service, of that dignity of spirit, and that fortitude and perseverance in the service of God, which should distinguish every real Christian. Blindness and rashness of mind sends forth an hasty flame, which is readily extinguished by the feeblest breath; but real and lasting must be the influence of that belief, which is founded on the deep conviction of reason; which, from an opinion of the understanding, hath passed into a principle and feeling of the heart; and which, as it is fixed on so sound a bottom, will be found, on every hazardous assault, durable and permanent.

But farther: This our belief must be appropriated to a particular object; it must be directed to Jesus Christ. It must therefore imply the firm persuasion of the mind, that he is what he calls himself, and what all his Apostles testify, “the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father, who proceeded forth and came from God; the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, in whom dwelt all the fulness of the God-
 U 2 “ head

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“head bodily.” That this sacred and divine personage, who co-existed with the Father before all ages, did, in the fulness of time, condescend to leave the mansions of eternal felicity, to assume our nature, to become the humble and afflicted Jesus of Nazareth, that he might save his people from their sins. That, in this capacity, he executed the office of the great Prophet, sent from God to instruct mankind in all the necessary branches of the divine will; that he became the great High-Priest of the world, who, by the sacrifice of himself, hath atoned for their sins, and become the author of eternal salvation to all who obey him; that, though now invisible, he is highly exalted, as the Sovereign Lord and King of all, invested with distinguished power and glory in the heavenly places, where he continues to carry on, and to complete, the whole scheme of our redemption.

Nor is this belief merely that cold unaffected assent which is the exercise of the understanding alone, and which may accompany the discovery of those truths in which the mind takes no interest or concern,

concern. It is such an earnest persuasion of the truths which respect all the parts of his Divine character; of the importance of his doctrines; of the excellence of those benefits which are derived from his merits, as denotes the warmest concurrence of all our affections, as engages the mind to comply with all the terms of the new dispensation of Divine grace, and to give obedience to all the venerable conditions on which it is founded.

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Hence we are obliged farther to observe, that this belief is by no means a partial principle, which is allowed to satisfy itself with an acquiescence in this Divine person, considered only in one particular view of his character. Presumptuous must be their confidence in Jesus as a propitiation and atonement, who are conscious that they indulge themselves in any habitual vice. The virtues of his sacrifice, though infinitely meritorious, shall never be prostituted so far, as to deliver from the wrath to come one unhallowed and corrupted soul. The properties and qualifications of the Redeemer, are intimately interwoven, and

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never can be separated; and they who wantonly appropriate to themselves an interest in his death, while they make no conscience of following out his instructions, or submitting to the government of his laws, express something, they know not what. Or, if they have any meaning at all, that meaning must be a direct insult upon the character of their Redeemer; must be full of impiety; must be fraught with blasphemy. Believe it, this sacred faith is no wild, unaccountable impulse of the mind; it is a sound, a solid, a rational and operative principle, which is never found unattended by the most precious and inestimable virtues, which must be delineated at all times on the outward character. If they are not to be seen there, or if the contrary symptoms evidently appear, we may then, consistently with all the rules of charity, pronounce that such a man is destitute of this divine principle. Is the world so very credulous as to be convinced, that there is any shadow of truth in those, who say that they believe in Jesus as the Son of God; but who, at the same time, make no scruple

scruple to break in upon his authority, to transgress his precepts, and to violate his laws? SERM.
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This observation leads us naturally to the second head of discourse; namely,

To consider how suitable and well adapted the faith of the gospel must be for rendering the mind triumphant over the world, for securing success to it in its pursuits of virtue, and for adorning it with all spiritual accomplishments.

To believe in Jesus as the Son of God, implies a cordial persuasion of every one of the great fundamental truths of that religion which he hath formed for the world; and consequently a steady conviction of the perfections and designs of God, as they are revealed in the gospel. This must be considered as the most substantial security of all virtuous conduct; without which the whole fabric of the religious and moral duties must be frail and infirm, must be ready to totter and fall to the ground. To be persuaded of the existence and essential attributes of God, as the Creator, the Governor, the Judge,

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and Lawgiver of nature, capable of enforcing obedience to his government by all the authority of eternal rewards and punishments ; this is the great principle which can fix the obligations of duty on the consciences of men, and give a proper and warm direction to all the movements of the human heart. Nor is there any other motive that can be found sufficiently strong to give stability to the character of man, and to preserve him, amid the violent, or more delicate temptations of life, from being drawn aside from the straight and regular line of duty. Does he possess the warm, the rooted, the habitual conviction that there is a God, who, though invisible, is about all his ways, noting the most indifferent parts of his character, and observing, with an attentive and anxious eye, all his actions, and all his thoughts ? Where, in the compass of all the laws of reason and society, is there so powerful a check upon the soul of man ; or any motive that can produce such circumspection and cautious vigilance ? What an anxious concern must possess his breast to acquire the character,
and

and to follow out the conduct, which becomes one who believes that he is perpetually under the eye of that Being, before whom his whole soul stands, at all seasons, stript and unveiled? How little will it signify to such a man, though the whole world should join in the loudest applauses of his piety and virtue, if he is conscious that there is one motive, lurking within, which cannot bear the scrutiny of an all-searching God? Does he feel the deep and abiding conviction that this God, who takes cognifance of his conduct, is the invariable friend of virtue, and the determined enemy of vice, and will, one day, exhibit all the magnificence of his power, in rewarding the one and punishing the other; and is there any thing that can be devised, so capable to interest the heart, and to take hold of all its principles?

There is indeed a reasonableness, a comeliness in virtue, and its exercises are attended with a natural satisfaction and pleasure. But still every man, who has the least acquaintance with the world, or the state of his own mind, will immediately

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ately confess, that such is the inward treachery of the heart; so great the violence of its passions, when addressed by some powerful temptation, that all the praises which men, in their cool hours, most justly bestow upon the pursuit of holiness, as intrinsically lovely, beautiful, and excellent, and as capable of constituting its own reward, will often be found in practice but empty sounds, a defence too weak against the warm and repeated insinuations of vice, altogether incapable of maintaining the fortitude of the mind unbroken by the severe assaults of trial and distress, or of raising the soul to these elevated degrees, to these singular instances of virtue which are required by the Christian laws. An higher, and a more vigorous energy is absolutely necessary to counteract the violent propensities of the mind, to affect the springs of its conduct, and to attach it with warmth and earnestness to the cause of virtue; an energy that can only be derived from the firm persuasion of those truths which are revealed by Jesus, that "verily there is a reward for the righteous, and a strange punishment

“punishment for the workers of iniquity.” What can so effectually animate the hopes, or alarm the fears of man, as the consideration that he is invested with the important character of a candidate for eternity; that he is stationed in a world which must soon be dissolved; and that every action here below, every period of life, and every part of conduct, surveyed at present by the attentive eye of God, and treasured up in his indelible records, shall, on the awful day of judgment, undergo a strict, impartial scrutiny, and receive a final and irreversible sentence?

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The truth is, if sufficient feelings of this pious persuasion were fixed and rooted within the mind, and wrought into the frame and temper of the heart, we might depend upon seeing the most precious effects, and numerous examples of that wise and steady character which is proof against all the insinuations of the world, and all the imaginable difficulties of duty. For who, that is possessed of the common powers of reflection, will be prevailed on to sacrifice a conscience void of offence,
for

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for all the most flattering bribery which it is in the power of this world to offer, when he keeps in his eye the important result of his conduct ; when he knows assuredly that, for the sake of a perishing and fugitive delight, he must relinquish the generous satisfactions resulting from the exercise of virtue, and abandon for ever all his hopes of eternal happiness ? In the venerable name of God ! What is there, I beseech you, which all this world can lay in the balance with innocence ; with integrity ; with the immortal hopes which it inspires ? What shall it avail a man to possess the united treasures, or to shine in the highest honours and distinctions of this life ; the gaudy delusions of a single moment ; if, on account of that wealth, for which he hath strained and prostituted his conscience, he must suffer an eternal poverty ; if, from that eminence of honour, he must be soon hurled down into the lowest abyss of infamy, there to mourn, for ever, with unavailing tears, with unprofitable sorrow, over the loss of God, of goodness, and of its joys ? What signify the applauses and caresses of men,
if

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if they are purchased at the expence of virtue and of honour? How soon shall that tongue be for ever dumb, which uttered the false and deceitful praise? How soon shall that ear be for ever deaf, which received it with joy? How soon shall there come an awful period, when the applause shall be converted into the most public disgrace, and his infamy be proclaimed to all the reasonable creation, by one who is the unerring Judge of the merits of every character? Can the roughest arm of adversity wrest integrity from the heart of that man who is conscious of his blessed destination, and pants for an eternity of joy? He will ever remember the sacred dignity, the divine origin of virtue. He embraces it as the child of heaven, as the image of the eternal God, which will not belie its form, nor retire one footstep from its station, for all the menaces of impotent men. He considers it as the sacred trust, committed by God to man, which must be preserved inviolate, unhurt by shame or fear. Fortified by this habitual impression, and animated by faith in the unseen recompense of reward, when the winds

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winds of affliction blow ; when the rains of distress descend ; when the billows of adversity beat thick upon his soul, he will obstinately withstand their united assaults. His hope is founded on the rock of ages. His confidence is in that God, who is the perpetual guardian of earnest virtue ; who, by the powerful influences of the divine Spirit, will establish those who are devoted to his service, make them bold in the profession, and resolute in the practice of the truth, and at last more than conquerors, through Him that loved them.

But farther, this belief, as directed to the great article of Christianity, the satisfaction of Jesus Christ, is to be considered as the most comfortable and enlivening principle, and as giving a proper spirit and alacrity to all the branches of Christian obedience. Without this persuasion, a dark and heavy cloud lours upon the mind. The consciousness of guilt, the dismal apprehensions of the wrath of that righteous Judge whose honour hath been violated, and whose justice is enraged, diffuse a most melancholy damp over all the powers of the soul, and
check

check its ambition after those immortal rewards, to which, in this state, it hath no title, and which it cannot, of itself, by any efforts whatever, be said to deserve. It is here, then, that this precious faith gives the most seasonable relief from all our guilty fears; insinuates into the heart the most divine consolation, and suggests the noblest encouragement to quicken and invigorate all its virtuous efforts. From the view of this sacred transaction, which was completed by the death of our Redeemer, the soul receives an additional feeling of all the horrors of sin, and is incited to the most vigorous and steady practice of all the duties of obedience.

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In the last place: How powerful is the influence, how sovereign the efficacy of this principle, to overcome the dread of death, and consequently to establish a perpetual serenity within? A serenity by which the mind is qualified for enjoying life itself with a proper relish, and at the same time for looking forward to the period which shall terminate it, not only without painful emotion, but with a secret joy. The Christian knows in whom
he

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he hath believed. His dependence is on that Saviour, whose rod and staff shall be the friendly companion of his footsteps through the valley of the shadow of death, and conduct him to glory endless and incorruptible.

Thus may we be convinced of the necessity and importance of this principle of faith in Jesus as the Son of God; a principle which is the source of the most animating consolation, which is subservient to the most generous purposes of religion on our hearts, and which alone is calculated to operate those effects which it is the glory of religion to produce, and the ornament of humanity to display. It becomes us, therefore, to employ with diligence the means by which it is established. Let us especially hold in the highest estimation the sacred festival of this day, which is appointed to invigorate our pious faith. From it we may expect to derive strength and nourishment to this best of principles, so beneficent to virtue, so nobly calculated to influence the feelings, and to regulate the conduct of

of men; and which, in proportion to its power, will confirm our attachment to our duty, in the midst of all opposition, support our resolution in every season of temptation, and assist our progress to those mansions of perfect holiness and untainted virtue, which are to be reached only by the practice of holiness and virtue upon earth.

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S E R M O N XVIII.

COMMUNION WITH GOD, AN OBJECT OF DESIRE TO
THE PIOUS MIND.

JOB, xxi. 3.

*O that I knew where I might find him, that
I might come even unto his seat.*

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THIS very sublime and valuable book presents us with the history and character of a person who had experienced the most remarkable vicissitudes of human life. He had once enjoyed the brightest smiles of Providence, and was crowned with many temporal honours and dignities. God, we are told, had made an hedge about him, and about his house, and

and about all that he possessed on every side; he had blessed all the works of his hands, so that his substance was increased in the land; and he was the greatest of all the men of the east. But, from high elevation, he was at once sunk into the lowest abyss of misery. Calamities, great and unexpected, fell upon him, and in a moment blasted all his pomp and glory.

In this situation he received a visit from his friends; from them, no doubt, he expected the lenient offices of pity, and all that generous sympathy which is due to the wretched. These miserable comforters, however, appear to have had no other object in view but to aggravate his sorrows, and insult his distress. It was their inhuman employment to display all their skill and invention in forming such arguments, and in throwing out such cruel insinuations, as might give the severest stings to the miseries which he endured. Hence they continually insisted upon this one false principle, that every calamity of life was an immediate infliction of divine judgment; that these temporal evils could descend only on those who were

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guilty,

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guilty, and forsaken of heaven; and that therefore, with the loss of his prosperity, he had lost the dearer happiness, of the favour and countenance of his God. "Remember," said they, "who ever perished being innocent, or when were the righteous cut off. Is not thy wickedness great, and thine iniquity infinite? for surely if thou wert righteous, the Almighty would awake for thee, and render the habitation of thy righteousness prosperous." But still amidst all this variety of misery, the spirit and the life of piety remained untouched. Conscious of his innocence, and firmly persuaded of the equity of God, this holy man feels a sacred attraction to the presence of that Being, before whom he could justify his character; to whom he could pour out his complaints; and from whose society and friendship he had reason to expect that animating solace and comfort, which was so vainly looked for from the false and treacherous friendship of the world.

In discoursing from these words, we shall inquire, in the first place, Where God is
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to be found; in the second place, We shall endeavour to show you, that the pious mind is naturally led to seek after God, and to breathe with ardour after a near communion with him.

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In the first place It is obvious that God will be found, by every sober and rational inquirer, in his works. Wherever the eye of man turns itself to survey the great objects of creation and providence, it sees and acknowledges a present Deity. Look up unto the heavens, and the spacious firmament: Consider the great and splendid objects with which they are adorned! Do they not manifest the presence, and display, in illustrious characters, the power, the wisdom, and beneficence of God! Their instruction is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. The difference of languages may obstruct the communication of truth; but these heavenly bodies are so many illustrious tokens of the nature and majesty of God, hung out from on high, to convey their ample demonstrations to every nation.

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There is no ear so deaf which their voice cannot reach ; no mind so barbarous that it cannot receive their instruction. With what an irresistible influence must the mind of man be drawn to acknowledge the presence and energy of that Supreme intelligence, whose power at first wound up the great machine, lighted up the sun, fashioned the spacious globes of heaven, assigned them their different orbits, and whose hand, for ever behind the scene, preserves them in regular and unerring harmony. From the heavens cast thine eye upon this earth ; there too thou mayest find the residence of the eternal God. Contemplate the various objects which it presents to thine observation, and they will all proclaim the active presence of the great Creator. He worketh upon the right hand, and upon the left : He stands revealed to the sight of reason in all the glories of the works of nature, and in the unceasing bounties of his providence. In what palpable characters is wisdom stamped upon the whole structure of the world ? and how favourably must we be led to judge

judge of that consummate art which prevails through all the parts of creation, from the beauty and perfection which we plainly discover in those that are more obvious to our view?

. But let us now turn for a little from the inanimate works of nature, to contemplate man, the noblest work of God in this lower world; the image and resemblance of the great Artificer himself! Whether we consider our external frame, or that internal spiritual principle which we feel within our breasts, we are furnished with the plainest marks of a peculiar wisdom and superintending Providence. Let us attend particularly to the inward part of our constitution, which forms the distinction of human nature. We find a principle of wisdom and virtue, capable of vast and extensive knowledge, of sublime and lofty designs; formed to contemplate truth; to pursue good; able to reflect upon the past; to foresee the future; endowed with capacities to dive into the reason of things, and open the secret springs of nature; to investi-

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gate the most useful arts, and to strike out the most profitable schemes of public good. These sublime perfections of human nature are the features of the Divinity; they intimate our connection with heaven, and our extraction from thence. They discover that supreme God, from whom they proceed, to be himself full of intelligence and design; possessed in his own nature of degrees of wisdom, and power, and goodness, inconceivably more excellent than what are communicated to his works. Those attributes, therefore, which we commonly ascribe to God, do in a certain measure exist in the frame of our own minds. There some shadows, some resemblances of that all perfect character are discernible, and are indeed intended to be the faint representation of that inexpressibly high standard of moral excellence, the full display of which would be an object too vast for our partial and limited eye to receive, and too illustrious for the weak and imperfect organs which we now possess to endure.

In general, so manifestly does the presence of the Divinity stand confessed in
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every corner of the universe that lies open to our view ; that the man who attempts, by argument, to banish the Creator from his works, or to ridicule others for their too easy faith, however he may value himself upon the acuteness of his intellect, and the force of his reasoning, will be found, in every step, proceeding upon the most glaring uncertainty ; receiving the grossest absurdities ; believing things for which there is no shadow of foundation, and adopting opinions totally contradictory to all the intimations of reason, and to the loud voice of nature and experience. We know that, in the present scene of things, there are indeed appearances which startle and perplex the human mind, and have led the unthinking to call in question the presence of a Supreme intelligence. But how blind must that man be, how arrogant and impious all his reasonings, who ventures to draw so absurd a conclusion ; to reject the numerous and certain proofs of wisdom and benevolent design, and from appearances, falsely called irregular, to say, that there is no Divinity that animates and guides the

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the whole? What mind is fit for forming a judgment of what may be thought an error in the ways of Providence? What head can contemplate, without giddiness, the depths of infinite wisdom? What understanding can sound its unfathomable abyss? The little and detached prospect of the Divine œconomy which we are allowed to see, gives us not a clear opening into the connection and subserviency of all its different parts; but from the general evidence of the most astonishing design, and from the whole analogy and constitution of nature, the mind of man may rest assured, that these puzzling appearances, by which it is sometimes perplexed, are undoubtedly the result of the deepest wisdom, invariably connected with the most important ends, and are so far from affording an argument against the superintending presence of the Deity, that they ought to be considered even as a confirmation of that great principle, as what may be expected to occur in the works and government of an all-perfect Being, when reduced to the examination of our feeble reason. But great and striking as
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the demonstrations of the Divine presence are, in the natural and moral world, yet still it must be confessed, that here the Divine character is not displayed so completely as the necessities of the human soul require.

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We proceed, therefore, to observe, in the second place, That God is to be found more fully in that most precious revelation of himself sent immediately from heaven. "God no man hath seen, or can see at any time, but the only begotten of the Father, he hath declared him unto men." Contemplate the Deity, then, as revealed to you in the Gospel: There you behold him exhibited in all those displays of his character, which not only inspire us with a sacred awe and reverence, but excite our joy and rapturous delight: accommodating himself to all the necessities of our condition, marking out to us the path of duty, and laying the sure foundation for our best hopes: There he shines forth, not only in the divine propensity of goodness, but in the still higher attribute of mercy, or a readiness to receive

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ceive into favour every penitent offender ;
proclaiming himself “ the Lord God mer-
“ ciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity,
“ transgression, and sin :” There he dis-
plays himself so full of beneficence and
love, that he confines not the riches of
his bounty to this short and mortal state,
but gives to all who shall return from their
rebellion, and approve themselves faith-
ful to him, and to their duty, good hope,
through grace, that “ when the earthly
“ house of their tabernacle is dissolved,
“ they shall be translated into a building
“ of God, an house not made with hands,
“ which is eternal in the heavens.”

These displays of the merciful designs
of God in the dispensation of his grace,
reflect a full light on the whole constitu-
tion of nature, and enable us, in the most
satisfactory manner, to account for all
those appearances which the vain and
conceited reason of man is apt to regard
as so many blemishes in the Divine admin-
istration. The reason of the Christian, en-
lightened by the instructions of the gos-
pel, considers this present life, not in a
detached and separate view, as the only
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period of his existence, but as bearing an immediate reference to another and more perfect state of things. By means of this discovery, how many of the ways and dealings of God are vindicated to man! Carrying this principle in our minds, our sentiments immediately alter with regard to the real value of the several distributions of Providence; and those things, which are now misnamed evils, appear to be, in truth, the most substantial blessings, when they are considered as the instruments of advancing the highest good of man, the virtue and the happiness of that soul which is appointed to survive this transitory and perishing world.

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Led by this infallible guide, we are taught to look forward to an approaching period, when every doubt shall vanish; when, from the infancy of our being, we shall rise to the full maturity of our mental powers; when every mystery that occurs here shall become the subject of our delightful contemplation; and every dishonourable suspicion of the Almighty's ways shall be changed into wonder, approbation, gratitude, and joy.

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This naturally leads me to observe, in the third place, That God is to be found most fully and perfectly in the highest heavens.

Though the presence of God be extended over all, yet heaven is properly the exalted seat of that universal King; there the throne of his majesty is erected; there innumerable companies of cherubim and seraphim perpetually contemplate and adore his perfections, and stand obsequious to his sovereign commands; there he gives the noblest exhibitions of his presence and Godhead, to those favoured spirits who are exalted to behold the face of the Father, to rejoice in the contemplation of his infinite excellence, and to partake of the felicity amidst which he dwells.

These are the pleasures which are reserved for the faithful in a future state; but we must not omit to mention, before we conclude this head of discourse, that, even in the present life, God is to be found in the ordinances and institutions of his grace.

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In the congregation of the saints, the great Master of the assembly often shines forth in all his glory, communicating the liveliest impressions of his majesty and excellence, to those who wait upon him with unfeigned piety, and who serve him in sincerity and truth: There he often descends with all the energy of his grace, with all those sacred influences which revive the hearts of his humble worshippers, which invigorate all their languid affections, and “fill them with all peace and joy in believing.”

We proceed now to shew you, in the second place, That the pious are naturally led to seek God, and breathe with ardour after a nearer communion with him. The pious we say, for it is peculiar to them to seek after, and to relish the presence of God. It is the character of the unrighteous, that “God is not in all their thoughts.” Much do they labour to banish from their minds all sense of his presence and superintendence, and have recourse to every suggestion that can lead them to a disbelief of his existence. The corruption and wickedness of the heart
itself

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itself is the real source of all Atheism; for every natural notion which men entertain of a Deity leads them to consider him as a pure and holy Being; as filled with the utmost detestation of all immorality and wickedness; as denouncing, and able to inflict, the most dreadful penalties on every sinful indulgence. It is true, indeed, that men may lose sight of these genuine conceptions of God, through the force of vicious solicitation, and suffer themselves to be betrayed into the gratification of all the wicked demands of appetite and passion, till, by the natural progress of iniquity, the habits of vice become strong and inveterate. Still, however, these natural conceptions of the Deity, and of his indignation against sin, while they continue to live within the heart of the transgressor, though they may be too feeble to restrain his impetuous passions, do not fail to depress his spirit; to vex and alarm his conscience; and to corrupt his relish for all the pleasures of life.

Something, therefore, must be done to afford him relief. Arguments are framed,
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ed, no matter whether well or ill founded, to banish from his mind the belief of a God; and as it is the earnest desire of his heart that there were no present Deity to notice and punish his iniquity, so this desire itself very easily throws a colour of truth on what he is so powerfully inclined to believe. It is thus that the wicked labour to persuade themselves that there is no present God, and seek in Atheism a retreat from the vexatious stings of guilt. In this manner, indeed, men may flatter themselves in their vicious courses. But, alas! the real state of things depends in no degree upon the passions or opinions of men. However they may strive with anxious industry to exclude the Deity from their thoughts, a God there is, from whom they cannot fly, from whose presence they cannot for a moment conceal themselves, who liveth and reigneth for ever, to pour a signal vengeance on all the workers of unrighteousness.

Far different are the views of the pious man. Much doth he rejoice in the persuasion of an omnipresent God,—a thought which gives a dignity and enlargement to

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the mind itself, and lays it open to those sublime enjoyments which result from the contemplation of infinite perfection; enjoyments infinitely more solid than can be hoped for from all the pleasures of sense united; giving the fullest peace and serenity to the soul of man, and spreading a cheerfulness and gaiety over the whole face of nature, which, without such a conviction, must be covered with all the blackness of darkness. — In this mortal and changeful state of things, what curse so great can befall a man, as to consider himself as separated from his God? By leaving God, does he not oblige God to leave him, and to withdraw that paternal favour and protection, which is the most choice ingredient in the happiness of the righteous? And how wretched must he be when thus left to himself, and destitute of every other resource! Such a thought is sufficient to overwhelm and desolate the heart. For, how in this wilderness of life, environed with snares, encompassed by a multitude of dangers on every side, pursued by enemies, and assailed by innumerable instruments of ruin, how can he live
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in peace, or be free from perplexing alarms?

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Nor is it from without alone that sorrows arise to the man who is thus forsaken by his God. Within his soul itself there are many fruitful sources of distress and pain. For what is he when abandoned to himself?—A creature restless and irresolute, full of uncertainty and doubt; a slave to imagination and caprice, impelled by furious passions, whose inconsistencies ravage and tear his heart, which by turns oppresses him with sadness, inflame him with ambition, shake him with fears, wound him with grief, or transport him with rage;—a picture this of the condition of those devoted spirits who inhabit the prisons of everlasting wrath, who are for ever forsaken by God, and in whom his providence takes no other concern than to secure and perpetuate their punishment. Whereas, did he rejoice in the presence, and feel the influence of the ever blessed God, this principle would operate as a powerful charm to settle and compose his thoughts; to limit his desires; to soften his passions; to fortify his reason; and to fill his whole

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soul with happiness and peace. (This is the privilege and the blessing of the righteous, to be connected with God, and to maintain a constant intercourse with Him, as the only object that can completely possess the soul: And who can tell what a tide of joy he is able secretly to pour into the heart which is thus united to himself, and which desires above all things his favour, as better than life and all its enjoyments? How full and complete must be the acquiescence of the mind, when, after being worn out with following the mockery of happiness here below, it returns from the vain delusive pursuit, and by the exercise of devotion, enlarges itself to receive him, who is its only proper and everlasting consolation? Like the sun when he breaks through the heavy cloud that loured upon the world, and pours forth his chearful rays to animate the face of nature; the light of the Divine countenance dispels every cloud of care, and gladdens with its ravishing communications the pious and holy heart.

Formed by the Supreme Mind rational and intelligent, the pious man ac-
counts

counts it the peculiar dignity of his nature, to know and to contemplate God; a study which brings such wisdom, a contemplation which affords such exquisite delight. While he expatiates through the ample field of nature, he views it as the august temple of heaven. He venerates a present Deity, by whom it is inhabited, and by whom it is upheld. Every grace and ornament which he discovers, then serves as fuel to his devotion, kindles the pure flame of love to the great source of all, whose being is boundless, immense, immeasurable, and whose nature is supremely good and amiable. Does he see him as he is to be seen in the face of Jesus, adorned with most gracious smiles, publishing the wonders of his grace, greater than the heart of man can conceive, and exhibiting the Son of his love crucified for us? With what vehemence does he feel the fires of Divine love burning within his breast, and with what ardent aspirations does his whole soul spring forth to embrace such a God, such a Father, such a Friend. Filled with the highest admiration of so much glory and

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excellence, his heart is united to God. He hath seen an end of all other perfection under the sun. There is no good that grows on this narrow and corrupt spot of earth, but withers and dies upon his touch, and sadly belies its flattering promises; amidst all the wide compass of human pursuits, he discerns no object that is worthy once to be named, in comparison with the favour and countenance of Him, on whom depends his everlasting portion, who is eternal in his nature, and unchangeable in his love. While he devoutly contemplates the perfection of the blessed source of all, he feels that he is engaged in a natural and pleasant exercise. But his pleasure is heightened into rapture and exultation, when his mind is able to appropriate, as it were, to itself, that God, whose excellence it contemplates with wonder and esteem, and to say, this God is my God; for ever and ever. "Whom have I in heaven but thee, and "there is none on earth whom my soul "desires besides thee;" the world, "with "all its vain and fugitive delights will "soon forsake me; my friends may de-
"ceive

“ceive me, or the most faithful of them
 “may be torn from my fond embrace by
 “the hand of death; my own heart and
 “flesh may faint and fail; but permanent,
 “and stable, and everlasting, is the Rock
 “of Ages, the staff and the support of my
 “tottering frame, the companion of my
 “footsteps through the valley of the
 “shadow of death, and my unchange-
 “able friend through eternity itself.”

Much, therefore, doth he delight to abstract himself from this tumultuous world, from this noisy and fantastic scene of things, and to resign himself to pious meditation, to sacred thought, to those sublime emotions, by which his soul is able to raise itself above the entanglements of sense, and to wing its way to that heaven to which it stands allied, and which it considers as its final and immortal habitation.

In the prosecution of these sober and manly pleasures, he seeks above all things the face and favour of his Creator, and a nearer approach to his Divine excellence. All wise men have an high relish for the pleasures of friendship, and value it as the

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choiceft ingredient in human happinefs, to be connected with one whose worthy example, and wife converfation, may improve them in knowledge and virtue, to whom they may have recourfe in all their sorrows, and from whose good affections, and found underftanding, they may derive fympathy, relief, or falutary counfel. But even among the beft of men there is not to be found a perfect character. The firmeft of our friends may be feparated from us. Their power at the moft is but narrow and circumfcribed, and may be unable to relieve the sorrows of our hearts, or to beftow on us any more than the tribute of pity. But in God the pious have found a friend, poffeffed of transcendent, fupreme, and infinite excellence, from whose fociety they can never retire, without feeling themfelves better and happier men ;—a friend omnipotent and omniprefent, to whom they can at all times refort, and enjoy, thofe fubftantial bleffings which flow from his favour ; a friend who flumbereth not nor fleepeth, who, amidft all the vexatious events of life, can, with a lenient hand, fmooth every rough tempeftuous

pestuous care that gathereth upon the surface of the soul, and make peace and tranquillity to spring up in every corner of the heart.

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Can the largest wishes of the human heart extend beyond the happiness resulting from such a friendship, from such an intercourse? No doubt the most ample communications of spiritual joy, which men can receive from the great Father of lights, must be imperfect, by reason of the infinite and incomprehensible perfections of the Divine nature, and the frailty and infirmity of the human character, which must remove the Deity to an unapproachable distance. But still, those emanations of the Divine favour, which the righteous often feel so refreshing to their souls, must make them breathe after nearer approaches to the great source of consolation, and wish to share in all that can be enjoyed of God upon earth. The more they have seen of the glory of that Almighty King, the nearer will they desire to contemplate his excellence, and the more will they strive to purify their souls from every corruption that may keep them at a distance from

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from Him, and to acquire those divine graces which may render them the proper objects of his favour; and how do their souls swell with joy, when they look forward to that approaching period, when they shall come even unto his seat, when from this earthly temple they shall be advanced to the immediate residence of that immortal King? Enraptured with the grand idea, they long earnestly for the happy time, when this mortal shall put on immortality, when they shall adore for ever the Eternal as all in all; in that state, when their affections shall never suffer any languour or decay, but shall glow and burn with unabating ardor.

To conclude, let us never forget what is the most essential qualification in those who are admitted to enjoy the presence of God, in the solemn acts of religious service. The qualification to which I refer is obvious. It is a sincere detestation of all vice, and an universal love and desire of holiness. Can any expect to find in God the consolation and the joy of their souls, who continue in the love of sin? No, my friends, as long as iniquity reigns

reigns in their hearts, so long must they despair of receiving one favourable smile from the great Sovereign of nature; so long do they stand marked out for feeling the severest effects of his eternal wrath. The power of sin must destroy all desire of intercourse with so pure and holy a Being; it must create a rooted disaffection to him; for what communion can subsist between light and darkness; what friendship can there be between God and Belial? It is genuine piety alone that can render the thought of God at all times pleasant and agreeable to the heart of man, and can procure the reciprocal regards of heaven. If thou return unto the Almighty, then shalt thou be built up. If thou put away iniquity far from thy tabernacle, the Almighty shall be thy defence: Then shalt thou have thy delight in God, and lift up thy face before Him: Thou shalt then make thy prayer unto Him, and he shall hear thee, and thou shalt pay thy vows.

S E R M O N XIX.

ON JUSTICE.

ISAIAH xxxiii. 15, 16.

He that walketh righteously, and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppression, and shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from bearing of blood, and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil: He shall dwell on high; his place of defence shall be the munition of rocks, bread shall be given him, his water shall be sure.

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JUSTICE is deservedly considered as the queen of the virtues, raising her head with a conspicuous splendor above them all.

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all. This virtue is the very basis and cement of human society, the tie that binds men together in confidence and love. And so very important and extensive are its nature and operations, that good men, in both sacred and profane writings, are generally called by the name of just.

In discoursing, then, on this subject, I shall endeavour, 1st, To explain the nature and properties of this great virtue of justice. 2d, To enforce the practice of it by some motives and considerations.

This virtue is very extensive in its nature, and its influence reaches to every imaginable situation of human life; for the definition of it is, "render unto every one his due." From its various and extensive properties, let us at present select some of the most important.

It is evident, then, in the first place, that all the branches of piety to God, strictly and properly speaking, may be comprehended under the notion of justice. Almighty God, by virtue of his own inherent excellence, and of the unmerited favours he never ceases to bestow upon us, hath a just right to all our services; and every

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every act of reverence, of love, of confidence, and of submission, is no more than the indispensable return which we owe to that Being, to whom we are indebted for all our comforts, and which we cannot withhold without the most essential violation of justice. But we shall consider this virtue at present in a more limited sense, as regarding the exercise of social duty, or the influence it must have on our conduct in the various situations in which we are placed in life, and the relations in which we stand to one another.

I begin by considering man as placed by God in this world, and consequently as having a claim to the necessaries of that life which is bestowed on him. Almighty God is the supreme possessor of all things. To some he hath dispensed his gifts with a more liberal, to others with a more sparing hand; but to all he means to grant such a measure of good things as may be sufficient for their subsistence. In this view, the very acts of charity, of generosity, of compassion to the needy, may be considered as included in the idea of justice. The rich and the
affluent

affluent are to be regarded as the stewards of the treasures of God, appointed by him to communicate, to reach down a part of his blessings to their necessitous brethren. They are invested with the great charge of the substance of Providence, and furnished with the means of procuring the most delicate pleasures which the mind can enjoy, and of becoming, like God himself, the benefactors of mankind, the refuge of the needy and the oppressed. If then, instead of possessing bowels of mercy, and proving public blessings to the world, they shall be found unfeeling, fordid, and rapacious, they are unjust to God and man; they detain that portion, to which he who is ready to perish hath a right.

It is evident, too, that truth and sincerity in all our intercourse with each other, is a branch of justice, as it is no more than what every man hath a title to look for from his neighbour. It is speech alone that can fit man for rational society. It is by this channel that the minds of men hold correspondence together, and communicate to one another
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their thoughts and intentions: By these means alone, they instruct, advise, and comfort each other, and form these councils and agreements which are subservient to their mutual support and assistance. Hence ariseth a compact, which is universally supposed, and universally understood, and which imposes on every man an invariable obligation to speak the truth, as it is in his heart. Without this, he must give up his privileges as a member of society, or injuriously deprive his neighbours of a right which they have acquired, in consequence of their social connection with him. Do we not naturally abhor the liar? Are not all men deeply sensible of the use, the benefit, the necessity of truth to society? for, what pleasure can there be in those intercourses, in which truth and sincerity have no share, and in which, of course, no trust can be reposed? Thus, when the faculty of speech is turned from its right use and application, which is to bind together society, and to increase its happiness, and perverted into an instrument of insincerity and deceit, there cannot be imagined

gined a grosser prostitution of this most excellent and invaluable power. Were we to suppose this to be an universal practice, there must be an end of all human society; for how would it be possible to live and converse with men on such a footing? Who would not rather wish to sequester himself from such a world, and earnestly desire solitude and retirement?

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Again, justice certainly requires the strict observance of all our promises, if they are in themselves lawful; and he who promises what he hath no intention to perform, or recedes from that promise which it was in his power to accomplish, is guilty of manifest iniquity. For a man may not improperly be said to be as guilty of a species of robbery, in depriving his neighbour of what he had a right to in virtue of his promise, as he who deprives him of what is actually in his possession.

But further, it is an essential property of justice, to show a tender regard to the character, the good name of our neighbour, and never, without just and weighty causes, to say or do what may be detri-

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mental to it. Every man hath a right to be treated with candour and humanity. Every man hath a right to the benefits of that society with which he is connected. Now, it is the soundness of his character that is the foundation of all his credit, his influence, his usefulness in that society, and gives him his proper title to its advantages; and, where is our pretention to justice, if, by our wantonness, or by our malice, we shall contribute to blast his reputation, and thus deprive him of that right? Is it not a most proper ground of complaint, to have the worst construction put upon his actions; to have idle reports and vague tales spread to his disadvantage, and thus to be misrepresented, slandered, or ridiculed in the world? Is not this a gross infringement of that justice, which will admit of no accusation, attended with such substantial hurt to the sufferer, without the most clear, and forcible, and irresistible evidence? Nay, it is even an important property of justice to stand up in defence of a worthy character, when injuriously treated. It is natural for every good man to rise with indignation

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at the picture of villany; and it is as natural for him to take fire when eminent virtue is loaded with undeserved reproach. Silence, upon such an occasion, he will always consider as the greatest injustice; and will be forward to record the virtues of those who are thus wantonly assailed, to vindicate their injured reputation, and stop the mouth of calumny. Justice, like charity, rejoices not in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth, which will ever tend to brighten the lustre of real merit. "He who glances at the character of a good man, and his friend in his absence," says a Roman philosopher, "nay, who does not defend him from the accusation of another, but falls in with the malicious laugh excited by the tale, he is a black man! Him thou art to beware of; thou art to shun."

Besides, this great virtue extends its influence to regulate every part of that intercourse, of that traffic and communication, which men carry on in the business of life. Honour in all our dealings is one of the essential laws of reason: it is one of the capital laws of religion. Thus

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it is enacted by the Spirit of God, "Thou
" shall not go beyond or defraud one ano-
" ther in any matter. Thou shalt not have
" in thy bag diverse weights, a great and
" a small: But thou shalt have a perfect
" and just weight; a perfect and a just
" measure shalt thou have. For all that
" do unrighteousness are an abomination
" to the Lord thy God *." A strict re-
gard to equity, in all commercial tran-
sactions, is undoubtedly what all men have
a right to expect; and he who overreach-
eth the unskilful, or takes advantage of
their ignorance, or of their necessities, be-
cause they repose their trust in him, and
depend upon his integrity, is guilty of a
species of villany, for which there is no
name too bad: it is not only injustice, but
the breach of confidence, the want of all
feeling: It is inhuman: it is barbarous.

Again: This virtue visibly implies a
sacred regard to the preservation of those
rights and interests, whatever they may
be, that are committed to our charge, and
an inviolable fidelity in the execution of
every

* 1 Theff. iv. 6. Deut. xxv. 13, &c.

every duty entrusted to us. Which leads us to observe, that this virtue must arise from principles which have a much deeper root, and more powerful influence, than external considerations. The man who practises justice merely from a dread of the present inconveniences that may attend the discovery of his wickedness, has never yet known the proper nature or influence of this principle. If these bars were taken out of the way, and he were allowed to accomplish his designs with impunity, you should immediately find him running headlong into all unrighteousness, and seizing every opportunity of gratifying the selfish and greedy propensity that bears rule within his heart. The man who is truly just, hath an inward sense of the loveliness and excellence of justice itself, and an abhorrence of every thing that is opposite to it. He hath an unalterable regard to the eternal rules of equity and integrity imprinted on his heart: And though all the impositions of external laws (the security that civil society hath provided against the general corruption and depravity of mankind) were

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at once abolished, he hath a law within himself; the principle of reason, the voice of conscience, will for ever preserve him faithful in the execution of his trust, and honest amidst the collected treasures of the world flung down before him. And what an amiable character does this present to our view! Thanks be to God! we can say, to the credit of human nature, that even in this world, corrupt as it is, such characters are to be met with: what a pity is it that they are not as universal as the good man earnestly wishes!

To these remarks we come now naturally to add, that as every man has a right to expect a fair and ingenuous treatment in every transaction in which he is engaged, so there is an invariable obligation on every person to satisfy every just claim that his neighbour hath, and punctually to pay every lawful debt which he hath incurred. Calamities we know there are in human life, which no wisdom can possibly guard against, and which may overwhelm the most honest man alive, and put it out of his power to do that justice which he had it so much at heart to perform,

form. In this situation, ſuch a man ought to be the object of pity and compaſſion ; for, however much he may feel for his own perſonal diſtreſs, he will feel as much for thoſe ſufferings which he hath been the inſtrument of bringing upon others. But he who contracts with another for thoſe things, for which he is conſcious to himſelf he may have little or no chance of ever returning the proper value, or who, by his own folly or extravagance, conſumes what does not of right belong to him, and, by outrunning his income, deprives himſelf of the power of ſatisfying thoſe to whom he is indebted, is, in the ſtrict ideas of morality, as chargeable with injuſtice, as if he had abſtracted the purſe or riſſed the coffer of his neighbour.

Again: The laws of juſtice oblige every man to exert himſelf to promote, as far as lies within his power, the real intereſt and good of the world. This is a debt that all men owe to ſociety : Nor is there any man, if he poſſeſſes health, ſtrength of body, and ſoundneſs of mind, in whatever ſphere he may move, that can be ſo very inſignificant, as not to be capable of

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filling up a necessary part in life, and adding something to the general interest. Hence the sluggish and indolent, who refuse to contribute any share to the good of the whole, are deservedly reckoned among the number of the unjust. They lie as an unnecessary burden upon others: They reap where they have not sown: They rob society of what it hath a just claim to, and live upon the fruits of the labours of others, to which they have no title.

But further: Considered as members of a civil community, that community hath a just and equitable right to require our services for its protection and defence. Here obedience to the laws of our country, and the support of the constitution under which we live, fall under the notion of justice. To this constitution we are indebted for many and inestimable privileges, as men and Christians; and, therefore, every service in our power is but a necessary tribute which we owe to it, for all that happiness of which it is the foundation: And it must be incumbent on all who belong to such a society, to furnish

nish cheerfully what is absolutely requisite for its maintenance, and never to detain, by fraud or artifice, that proportion which they owe towards the necessary and reasonable demands of government.

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But we forbear to proceed any further in this wide and extensive field; and shall now consider, how this great virtue naturally operates within the narrower spheres of human life, and regulates all our domestic connections. Here we have to consider the important relation of master and servant, from which result a set of duties, that, by the rules of equity, are incumbent upon each of them. The master is obliged, in justice, to maintain and to protect his servant, to afford him the wages that are due to him, and, in every respect, to treat him with all gentleness and humanity, remembering the relation in which he stands to himself, as one of the same nature, who, from the laws of reason, and the dictates of religion, hath a right to soft and gentle usage; as one who, being found worthy and faithful in his station, hath a right to esteem and regard, as a most valuable member of human society, and, for
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this reason, favoured with the love of the great and common Master of all, who respects not the persons of men, and acknowledges only that distinction which is founded on the goodness and rectitude of every man's own character. The voice of justice, in this article, resounds through all the laws of God: "Ye shall not rule
"over one another with rigour; for ye
"are all brethren. Woe unto him that
"useth his neighbour's servant without
"wages, and giveth him not for his work.
"Masters give unto your servants that
"which is just and equitable; forbear
"threatening; know that ye also have a
"Master in heaven. Despise not the cause
"of thy man-servant, or maid-servant,
"when they contend with thee. Did not
"he that made thee in the womb make
"him? Did not one fashion us all in the
"womb?" On the other hand, justice invariably obliges servants to the strictest fidelity in all the duties which are committed to their charge. By virtue of that relation in which they stand connected, their master hath acquired a just right to their labour, their time, their diligence; and

and they who are careless in the discharge of the duties which fall to their share, who mispend their time upon other concerns than such as are connected with their proper occupations, who take the advantage of their master's absence to neglect their necessary business, and give themselves up to sloth and idleness, are unrighteous, are unjust, by robbing their master of those advantages which he hath an unquestionable title to derive from their attention and care. For such dishonesty they must one day account to their Master in heaven, who will not fail to render to them according to their deeds. On this subject the declarations of Scripture are plain and explicit: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, in singleness of heart, as fearing God. Please your masters well in all things, not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; knowing that whatsoever thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free."

Let us further consider the influence of justice, as regulating our conduct in another

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ther important connection, which subsists in private and domestic life ; I mean the relation of parent and child. All whom God hath blessed with children, are certainly called upon, by the plainest dictates of reason and justice, to employ themselves in such branches of honest industry, as may enable them to provide for the necessities of those who depend upon their immediate care, and to secure a proper subsistence for those whom they have been the instruments of bringing into existence. Children, by all the ties of nature and humanity, have a right to the most endearing expressions of love and kindness ; and the neglect of these offices deserves the name, not only of injustice, but of unnatural barbarity. They have a right to be cherished with the most tender affection by their parents, whose duty it must be to watch over them, in the listless seasons of childhood and youth, with the most anxious vigilance ; to train them up to some occupation, by which they may be enabled to maintain their place in society with credit and advantage, and contribute their share to the good and happiness of the

the world; and, for this purpose, to take every opportunity of sowing in their minds the seeds of divine grace; of instilling such principles of religion and virtue, as may take an early and permanent hold on their hearts, as may sufficiently fortify them against the temptations of the world, and lay the foundation of a steady and invincible integrity of character through life. On the other hand, how deep and sacred are the obligations under which children lie to their parents? What veneration and love are due to those, who, under God, have been the means of our being, and the instruments of our happiness and welfare? The tenderest offices, the most unwearied labours of love, through our whole lives, are not sufficient to repay the debt of gratitude. An untoward, unthankful, and undutiful disposition, in children to their parents, is properly reckoned an evidence of that vicious cast of mind, from which nothing good is ever to be expected; and he who despises and revolts against a tender and affectionate father, is not only hated and despised, but pointed at by the world as an object of horror.

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horror. "Cursed," says Solómon; "be
"he, that setteth light by his father or
"mother: the eye that despiseth these,
"the ravens of the valley shall pluck it
"out, and the young eagles shall devour
"it."

Further: Justice undoubtedly requires a grateful feeling of favours received, and a warm propensity to make suitable returns of kindness and good offices. Benefits conferred induce so many powerful obligations on the mind; and he who is insensible of these ties, or ungrateful to his benefactor, is charged with the grossest injustice, with a crime of such deep pollution, that it admits of no apology, and discovers a cast of mind lost to all the impressions of virtue. Thus, it is an old and a just observation, "If you call
"a man ungrateful, you call him every
"thing that is wicked."

Justice, likewise, implies deference and respect from inferiors to their superiors. The different ranks and orders of men are ordained by Providence for the wisest ends, and are necessary to the very existence of society. A superior state claims,

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as its right, a proper share of honour and submission; and he who is disrespectful to those above him, discovers a fretful, surly and impatient temper, rebellious against the wise appointments of Providence, and hostile to that society from which he derives so many advantages. On the other hand, lenity, indulgence, and condescension, on the part of superiors to their inferiors, is an evident principle of justice. Power and honours are bestowed by Heaven, not merely for the benefit of individuals, but for the general good. They are a trust from God; the instrument of advancing the public felicity: To use these advantages, then, as the means of oppression, is to infringe the law of Providence; it is unjust, and barbarous to those men, who, in every other respect, are our equals, and members of the same family, and therefore entitled to our protection.

We now proceed to the second general head of discourse, which was to enforce the exercise of this virtue by some motives and considerations.

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In the first place, Let it be considered, that the steady practice of justice and integrity advances human nature to the highest perfection, by forming it to a resemblance of God himself. Justice is one of those exalted attributes of the Supreme Being, which regulate his will, and influence the whole of his procedure. "Just" and true are all the ways of that King "of faints: Righteous is he, and upright" are his judgments." Necessarily determined to that which is right and equitable, he marks with attention the various claims and merits of men; fulfils with fidelity all his gracious promises; never inflicts any evil upon his creatures which they have not themselves deserved; but measures his distributions according to their influence in producing the noblest and the best effects. The nature of God is the perfection of reason, and the great pattern for the imitation of all his reasonable creatures: and the more of that we transfer into our characters, the more of the glory of heaven do we bring down to earth; the more do we partake of the felicity of the everlasting

everlasting God, which is connected with, and founded upon his perfect excellence.

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In the second place, The obligation to justice is founded upon the constitution of Providence, which hath fixed the state and relation of mankind, and rendered the duties arising from them eternal and unalterable. These duties, when traced to their proper source, cannot be considered as independent of the Supreme Creator, but as agreeable to the will, and recommended by the perpetual voice of Him, who hath allotted to us the condition, and united us by the relations in which we find ourselves placed. So long as these relations continue, so long do the duties resulting from them remain invariable; and to transgress, or to strive to alter these relations, by having recourse to fraud or unrighteous practices, is to insult the Providence, and to rebel against the will of Heaven.

In the third place, justice is most essentially necessary to the public tranquillity, to the order and happiness of the world. For it is the very foundation and

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cement of society, the chief preserver of its security and peace. If it is withdrawn, all is over-run with jealousy and dark suspicion; public happiness is at an end; society is at once dissolved; and a wide field is opened for confusion, for disorder, and every evil work. On the other hand, what a comfortable abode would this world prove, did all its inhabitants continually walk by the salutary rules which justice prescribes? Could we suppose, that every individual of the human race were incapable of employing any base artifice, to encroach upon the felicity or the interests of others, and invariably solicitous to promote their happiness, what a change would this produce in our condition? Contentment, security, and mutual confidence, would thus cement the world, and render this present state of pilgrimage a comfortable passage to the everlasting abodes of harmony and love. Then would there be peace on earth, and good will among men; and in such a serene and indulgent clime, every fruit of righteousness would prosper and flourish.

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Then would heaven begin upon earth; and all the graces, which are to be found there only in their highest maturity and perfection, would display themselves even in this inferior soil.

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In the fourth place, justice and honesty are conducive to our own private advantage and prosperity in the world. The great Author of our nature hath so connected our duty with our present interest, that the performance of the one is generally followed by the attainment of the other; and in this sense virtue may be said to be its own reward. This truth is particularly evident with respect to the virtue for which we now plead. An uniform regard to equity secures to us the trust and confidence of mankind; and he whose dealings in business are steady, upright, and conscientious, is always in the safest and surest road to prosperity in the world. On the contrary, every one must see how much of bad policy there is in injustice, which never fails to issue in disappointment and ruin. By grasping at an unlawful and exorbitant gain, the

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dishonest man loses his character and credit, on which his success depends, and consequently sacrifices what is infinitely more valuable than all the profits which his dishonesty can yield. Mankind naturally withdraw themselves from a person of this description, and give up all connection with one whose integrity hath become so very suspicious, and on whom they can no longer depend.

Besides, in the fifth place, do we not observe, that honour and unshaken integrity always establishes within the mind a store of private peace and happiness? The honest man, though poor, enjoys the small purchase of his industry with a peculiar relish; because he possesses the cordial regard of men; because he possesses that, which is infinitely more valuable than the united regards of all the world; the well-founded approbation of his own mind; the heartfelt delight of conscience, which he would not relinquish for all the pomp and treasure of the most splendid monarch upon earth. Such a man knows none of those artifices which iniquity requires

requires to hide its deep laid villany. He is a stranger to those uneasy fears which harass the vicious mind. Conscious, that in his conduct there is no step, that in his heart there lurks no motive, which shuns the light, he is ever armed with an honest confidence, and a becoming dignity. But the unjust man, though he should be supposed to attain all his ends, and to become as great and flourishing as his own heart can wish; yet he must have made a singular progress in vice, indeed, and thereby must have stupified his conscience to a degree which can scarcely be conceived, if he enjoy much of that comfort, which he vainly hoped to derive from his unlawful gains. These can procure him no relief from the twists and convulsions of his own mind: But as he increases in riches, he increases in sorrow. He lives in torment, and dies in horror.

In the sixth place, let it be considered, how utterly inexcusable all injustice is, as implying a transgression against the clearest discoveries which God hath given of his will, and of our duty. The great law,

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to which all the acts of justice may be reduced, is comprehended in one emphatic rule; "Whatsoever ye would that men should do unto you, do ye even so to them." Here is a law, which is involved in no sort of obscurity, which is plain and intelligible to all capacities. It is a rule continually at hand, and which every man carries about with him. Who can possibly be at a loss how he is to act in any affair which concerns another; when he hath no more to do, but to think one moment; to examine the feelings of his own heart; and to attend to what they dictate? Self-love is a penetrating principle, and never loses sight of its own rights and interests. Let us, therefore, imagine the rights and interests of our neighbour to be placed in the same scale in which ours are, and consider what weight we are to allow them. Injustice is the violation of a law, about which there can be no ambiguity; and, is it not a strong aggravation of all guilt, that it is a contradiction to the most legible characters of duty, and to the homefelt impressions of the mind itself?

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It remains now only, before we conclude, that we mention the very peculiar obligations to justice that lie upon all who profess the Christian faith. The religion of Jesus is most friendly and favourable to all the interests of real and practical goodness : And it is the constant voice of his Gospel, that the practice of righteousness, though it is not to be considered as founding any title to the Divine acceptance, is the express, the essential, the indispensable condition, without which men can never see the face, or enjoy the favour of God. We are there taught “ what is good, and what the Lord requireth of us, to do justly, to love “ mercy, and to walk humbly with our “ God.” We are there expressly assured, “ that no unrighteous person shall inherit “ the kingdom of God ; ” — “ that the un- “ just are reserved unto the day of perdi- “ tion ; ” that “ the wrath of God is reveal- “ ed from heaven against all unrighteous- “ ness of men ; and that they shall be con- “ demned who take pleasure in unrighteous- “ ness.” Shall men then presume to con-

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temn or neglect the practice of a duty, on which God himself hath laid so great a weight; or imagine, that the service which is acceptable to him, consists principally in some rapturous extacies of an heated fancy, without any regard to honesty and justice, which, being a moral virtue, they may be apt to consider as of less importance, and not to be compared with these more sublime and spiritual exercises? Believe it, my friends, every scheme of religion that does not recommend the uniform practice of righteousness and integrity, will be found in the issue to be a most dangerous and deplorable delusion. To be conscious that we cordially believe in Jesus, and have an interest in the benefits which he hath purchased, is undoubtedly the noblest foundation of triumphant joy. But in vain do men triumph in the prevailing efficacy of their Redeemer's merits, if they give no diligence to display those virtues by which his character was adorned. It is an eternal truth, that his sacrifice shall never avail to save a soul which is devoted to unrighteousness. He came
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not to dissolve, but to strengthen, our obligations to obedience; and unless we discover a strict regard to real integrity, it is impious to suppose, that we can be among the number of those whom he died to redeem: For he came to redeem men from all iniquity, and to purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works.

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S E R M O N XX.

ON THE DUTY OF MAINTAINING AN UNSULLIED
CHARACTER.

REVELATION iii. 4.

Thou hast a few names even in Sardis, which have not defiled their garments ; and they shall walk with Me in white : for they are worthy.

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THESE words are a part of the epistle to the angel, or overseer, of the Church of Sardis. In the foregoing verses, our blessed Saviour reproves his negligence, and excites him to a more careful discharge of his duty. Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found thy works perfect before God. At the
same

same time, in the words of our text, he allows that there are some persons, who, even in Sardis, in that corrupted place, have maintained their innocence, and kept their garments undefiled from the world. To animate them to steadfastness, and perseverance in their integrity, he concludes the epistle with a promise of perfect happiness and triumphant virtue in a future state. They shall walk with me in white; and, in the fifth verse, "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment, and I will not blot his name out of the book of life; but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels."

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In discoursing on the words of the text, I propose, in the first place, to consider the great difficulty of preserving innocence amidst surrounding corruption; in the second place, to represent the dignity and excellency of that man, who, notwithstanding every assault, maintains an unsullied character; in the third place, to enforce the imitation of this noble example, by the great motive suggested in the text, that persons of this character shall walk with Christ in white; and, lastly, to consider

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consider the reason why this blessed reward shall be conferred on them, "for they are worthy."

I shall consider, first, the great difficulty of preserving innocence amidst surrounding corruption. It is no breach of charity to affirm, it is an observation founded on every day's experience, that the generality of the world lie in a most deplorable situation, have forsaken God, and corrupted their ways. Such is the society with which we are in some measure obliged to mingle and converse. Some are seduced from virtue by their natural love of fellowship and society; and others, by their peculiar circumstances and situation, or by the unavoidable business and demands of life. Amidst so general a contagion, what virtue can expect to thrive, or breathe an healthful and untainted air? By our intercourse with a sinful world, we see vice and iniquity often exhibited before our eyes. The natural abhorrence which rises in the breast at the first appearance of its detestable form, is insensibly weakened and effaced by repeated views of it. We begin to contemplate it with less aversion, and need
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but a little stronger temptation to make the easy transition to the love and practice of it. There is, besides, in the view of a multitude running to do evil, a temptation of peculiar force: But especially, if that multitude consists of persons of higher rank, we are led by an influence, which is almost irresistible, to imitate their example. SERM.
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That veneration, awe, and reverence, which their superior eminence in life naturally excites, are ever ready to consecrate and justify their actions in the eyes of their inferiors, who have always been accustomed to connect the notions of propriety of thought, and goodness of conduct, with a great name and a plentiful fortune: And, in general, when such as are esteemed and regarded by men for their great qualities, and abilities of any kind, seem to be the patrons of vice, their vices themselves, instead of striking us with all their odious deformity, appear with a sanctity, derived from that very esteem and regard we pay their persons. We are ready to think, that a conformity of practice is but a necessary tribute we owe

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owe to their more cultivated and enlarged understandings. We easily persuade ourselves there can be nothing so heinous in folly and vice, as others would make us imagine, while they are practised by persons so universally approved of and admired. There is, besides, in every breast, a secret, but almost irresistible, bias to imitation. It is thus the little child naturally acquires the language, the peculiar accent, the dispositions, the manners, of those with whom it is most conversant. It is thus that every man, without a constant violence offered to his nature, unavoidably learns the style, adopts the sentiments, and the most indifferent habits, of those with whom he lives. How powerful then the influence of surrounding wickedness! and how unavoidable the imitation of it! aided by our inward depravity, and fortified by the authority of example, it gains an irresistible power, and easily triumphs over a feeble and imperfect virtue. Amidst the universal infection of vice, some men there are, whose particular constitution, or want of experience in the ways of the world, expose them

them greatly to its deadly influence, and render their hold of innocence and integrity extremely slippery. The man of good nature, and of an easy pliable temper, whose honest heart is conscious of no perverse design, suspects not the treachery of others, and therefore becomes an easy prey to the temptations of the wicked. To avoid the imputation of obstinacy, and from a mistaken shame, and false fear of giving offence, he readily complies with their solicitations. When he enters the haunts of corruption and vice, that he may not be deemed an impertinent intruder on the pleasures, or by his presence damp the mirth, of the company, he is at last led to catch their unhallowed spirit, and mingle in every forbidden enjoyment. The frequent scenes of debauchery he is obliged to witness, render vice familiar to his eye. The young man, whose few years have brought but small experience to point out the consequences of his actions, or teach him caution and prudence, upon his entrance on the active scenes of life, is immediately assaulted by bands of confirmed and hardened

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ened sinners. Nursed in retirement, untutored in the deceits of the world, and unacquainted with his own strength, he rashly associates himself with profligate and abandoned companions. At first, he is astonished to hear those awful principles, he has been taught to reverence as sacred, ridiculed and overthrown; startles at that profane and impious voice, which, from every corner, insults his hitherto chaste and uncorrupted ear; and wonders at open lewdness securely practised, without sending one honest blush to the face, to testify an inward sense of guilt. His awkward appearance, his innocence and simplicity of heart, expose him to derision; and he is pointed out as a novice, as raw and ignorant. Such treatment alarms his pride, and rouses him to study a nearer acquaintance with the world, and to dive into every fashionable mystery of unrighteousness. In the pursuit he finds himself abundantly successful; is pleased with his rapid progress, and congratulates himself upon the wonderful opening and enlargement of his mind. The amiable image of retiring innocence sometimes steals

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steals across his view, and suggests some gentle whispers to stop his career. But he quickly reflects, that it was not the voice of enlightened reason, but the language of a cheating phantom, formed by ignorance, and maliciously contrived to curb the vigorous and manly sallies of the soul. If a faithful friend lends his salutary admonition, the advice is immediately rejected, as an insult on his more improved understanding: Or, if he is abundantly satisfied of the goodness of his friend's intentions, yet he has learned to pity and despise such sentiments, as the dictates of a narrow mind, and a contracted spirit. One temptation more strikes the final blow, which overturns the long tottering throne of innocence and integrity, and decides the victory, perhaps for ever, on the side of impurity and vice. Thus the simple, unsuspecting youth, naturally void of understanding in the arts of men, easily falls into the snare spread for unguarded innocence; and listening to the enticing speech and flattering lips of sinners, "goeth after them as an ox to the slaughter, or as the fool to the correction."

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“ of the flocks, till a dart strikes through
“ his liver, as a bird hasteth to the snare,
“ and knoweth not that it is for his life.”

From such views as we have given of the difficulty of maintaining innocence and integrity amidst surrounding corruption, we may easily infer, in the second place, the dignity and excellency of that man, who, notwithstanding every assault, maintains an unsullied character. Of all the virtues, there can be none more necessary for our present state than fortitude or courage. Without this quality, the best dispositions are ready to lose their name, and to serve only to lead us the more easily astray, and the whole system of internal virtues are cramped and fettered in their operations, or become a ready prey to every invader. Nor is there any virtue, which is more the object of admiration, or strikes the mind with deeper reverence and esteem. According to the increase of dangers and difficulties, and the proportionable strength of mind exerted in surmounting them, the lustre of the character rises, and our veneration for it is enhanced.

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The foldier, who stands up to defend his Sovereign's crown, and bravely repels the blow which threatens the liberties of his country, is dignified with the venerable name of an Hero, and rewarded by the unanimous acclamations of mankind : And is not he who ruleth his spirit, who protects its invaluable liberties, far better and more intrepid than the mighty ? " He " wrestles not against flesh and blood, but " against principalities and powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this " world, against spiritual wickedness in " high places." His combat does not endure only for a little, nor is his security the reward of a few hours of steady opposition, but every time he quits his retirement, and enters into society, his integrity is exposed to some one envenomed arrow, and is often assaulted by all the deceivableness of unrighteousness, and through the whole of life he maintains an unceasing struggle. Nor are his foes, foreign, open, and declared, equally dangerous as those secret enemies of his own house, those insidious traitors which lurk within his flesh, ever ready to be enflamed and led

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astray by the bribes of an alluring world, and to open for them a secret passage to his heart. Amidst such dreadful dangers, what undaunted courage and intrepidity must his soul be possessed of, in order that he may be enabled to hold fast his righteousness, to retain untainted innocence! While the wicked contemn and despise the deluded man, whose virtue has fallen an easy and unresisting sacrifice, they cannot avoid paying reverence to him, who discovers such magnanimity in overcoming temptation, and in their hearts confess his hidden worth and value. They wonder at the firmness of those roots, which keep him steady against the rushing torrent, and admire the exquisite contrivance of that armour, through which the sharpest arrows cannot pierce. Think not, however, that such invincible bravery is the attainment of his own unassisted reason. He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High. He abideth under the shadow of Him that is almighty. His are the everlasting arms which guide his feet from the snares of the fowler: His the shield which wards off the arrow that

that flieth by day, the pestilence that wasteth at noon, and every plague, from the dwellings of his virtue. How beautiful appears the Son of God, harmless, and without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation! He was raised by his heavenly Father to shine as a light in the world, clothed with unspotted innocence, the noblest garb of human nature, adorned with the splendid robe and precious diadem of integrity of heart. He was shewn on earth, to make surrounding vice appear more odious and ugly, to stop, by his example, its baleful influence, to make iniquity, as ashamed, hide its face. He was the favourite of God, beloved by the good, revered by the wicked. His integrity was the transcript of the divine perfections. It was virtue itself, clothed with a living form, exhibited to the world to reclaim a degenerate age, and rouse up all that is noble and generous in the human breast.

I proceed, in the next place, to enforce the imitation of this noble example, by the great motive which is mentioned in the text, "That such shall walk with

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“Christ in white.” This expression seems to have an allusion to the white robes which the Roman conquerors wore in their triumphal processions; or to the views given us in Scripture of God and the holy angels, who are often represented there as arrayed in white garments, to denote that untainted sanctity, and spotless purity, which is inseparable from their exalted nature. By walking with Christ in white, we are therefore to understand the promise of an open triumph to be bestowed on undefiled integrity, and the complete security and increase of unsullied virtue, in a future state. On that awful day, when God shall judge the world in righteousness, the man, who has nobly fought the good fight, who has finished his course with honour, shall find his temples surrounded with laurels of unfading glory. Then the man, who has had the boldness to continue singularly virtuous, amidst universal depravity, shall shine forth as the sun, and as the brightness of the firmament. His righteousness shall be brought forth as the noon-day; and those applauses of the Lord, formerly whispered by the secret voice of conscience,

conscience, to delight and support his soul on earth, shall then be published in ravishing sounds from the mouth of his Judge, and echoed back by the united shouts of angels and of men. With vice and iniquity, and every corrupt passion, bound in fetters, to adorn his triumphal chariot, he shall be conducted in solemn pomp and majesty to Sion, to the holy city, there to dwell for ever in the courts of God, and to inquire, through eternity, into the beauties of the heavenly Jerusalem. How great, O God, is that goodness which thou hast laid up for them that serve thee, that fear thy name before the sons of men. Thou shalt hide them for ever in the secret of thy pavilion: Thou shalt defend them from the snares of men, and from the strife of tongues. How transporting, how rapturous, the anticipating thought of those blessed regions, whose confines are for ever divided from the dreadful abodes of the wicked by an impassable gulf; where virtue, delivered from this body of sin and death, reigns triumphant, fearless, and secure; where no temptation

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enters, to divert the eye from the steady contemplation of the noblest objects, where the voice of the deluding charmer is never heard to disturb the spiritual concert; where no latent corruption shall damp the mind with one uneasy feeling, or venture to dispute the empire of the heart, but every passion shall be refined and purified, and shall be directed unerringly to its proper object; where every dishonourable suspicion of the ways of heaven, created in the ignorance, and nursed in the clouds and darkness, of this earth, shall be immediately dispelled by the full display of the Creator's designs, and be succeeded by admiration, wonder, gratitude, and love; and where one blest society, joined by the indissoluble ties of the most intimate friendship and affection, and united in one common interest, shall raise their melodious voice, and shall sing, with unceasing accents, " Blessing, and honour, and
" glory, and power, to Him that sitteth
" upon the throne, and to the Lamb who
" hath washed us from our sins in his
" blood, and made us kings and priests un-
" to God."

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The last particular, which remains to be considered and explained, is the reason assigned in the text for conferring such honours on the good and virtuous: "for they are worthy." By this we are not to understand, that any of the human race, considered as in themselves, can possibly be deemed worthy of everlasting happiness in the sight of God. Presumptuous must be the pretences of the sons of apostate Adam to the highest rewards, since perfection is utterly beyond the reach of fallen man, and complete obedience to the will of God is an attainment denied to the most exalted virtue upon earth. In numberless instances we all offend, and come short of the glory of God: In his sight, all our righteousness is but as filthy rags. It is therefore the righteousness of Christ alone, imputed to us and received by faith, which can justify our persons in the sight of God, and constitute our title to that eternal life, which Christ hath procured by his meritorious sufferings and obedience. But the expression in the text, denotes, that the persons who shall partake of this glorious reward

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are possessed of a moral aptitude or fitness of dispositions to receive and enjoy the blessings he has purchased, that they are renewed in the inward man, regenerated in the spirit of their minds, and have the Divine image restored in their hearts by the spirit of grace. It is fixed by the unalterable decree of Heaven, "That except we are born again we cannot enter into the kingdom of God." It is determined, in the very nature of things, that this happy change is necessary to qualify us for that immortal inheritance. For what is Heaven? It does not so much consist in an actual alteration or change of state, as in having our reason, and every chaste, rational, and religious disposition dilated, and extended to its highest pitch. What are those eternal joys which it contains, but the security, the increase, the perfection of virtue? It is therefore those seeds of grace, sown on earth, and protected from the assaults of the world, which can alone expect the ripening influence of the Son of glory. "Be not therefore deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth that

“ that shall he also reap. He that sow-
“ eth to the flesh, shall of the flesh reap
“ corruption ; but he that soweth to the
“ spirit, shall of the spirit reap life ever-
“ lasting.” Let us carefully cultivate
that inward purity of heart, that sanctity,
that integrity of life, which is unspotted
from the world, which shall render us
worthy, through the merits of Christ, of
that undefiled inheritance which fadeth
not away, and without which no man can
see the Lord. Let us study to abound in all
the graces of the Spirit, which are, by
Christ, to the praise and glory of God ;
and let our fruit be unto holiness, that in
the end we may lay hold on everlasting
life.

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SER-

S E R M O N XXI.

ON THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD.

PSALMS ciii. 19.

*The Lord hath prepared his throne in the
heavens ; and his kingdom ruleth over
all.*

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IT is the great delight of the pious psalmist to celebrate the various attributes of the divine nature, and as his soul was continually inflamed with the most grateful sense of the bounty of God, his most common topic is to shew forth the praises of the divine goodness, and to rejoice in the persuasion of that superintending providence, of which he opens up views the most pleasant in contemplation, and the most

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most comfortable and profitable to the heart. In this psalm, after having enlarged on the many public and private testimonies of divine goodness and grace to the sons of men, as furnishing the most irresistible incitements to gratitude and praise, he suddenly breaks out, with the voice of triumph and exultation, into the grand and animating sentiment which the text expresses, "The Lord," so inconceivably gracious and munificent, "hath prepared his throne in the heavens;" but the heaven, even the heaven of heavens, cannot circumscribe his influence: "His kingdom ruleth over all."

In discoursing further on these words, I shall, in the first place, briefly consider a few of those innumerable arguments, which demonstrate the doctrine of a superintending providence exercised over the world. And here, not to mention the many powerful arguments, which every object around us furnishes, in support of this truth, must it not appear impossible for any man, who thinks upon the subject at all, to separate the idea of a providence from that of creation, or to suppose, that
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there is a God, the maker of all things, and yet to deny that he exerts a sovereign dominion and power over that world, and those creatures, which he hath made. What is the first conception that enters into the mind, when thinking of the nature of God? Is it not, that he must be self-existent, and independent of any superior cause? But it is absurd to suppose a supreme and sovereign power destitute of actual rule and dominion. Such a power would undoubtedly be useless and vain. Do we not conceive of the Almighty, as the great first cause of all things, possessed of all possible perfection? That world which he hath made, he must have created for some great end; hence it is infallibly certain, that he must be perpetually attentive to every part of the vast system of nature, in order to guide it to the grand issue, which, from eternity, he hath planned.

Again, we can have no other notion of God, than as a Being who is constantly, and at all times, present with his works. But to suppose him diffused throughout all, and perpetually present with, his creatures,

tures, without being in the least interested in any thing that is going on, or communicating any influence to regulate his works, is, beyond all expression, absurd and impious.

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Perhaps it may be thought, that though the Almighty superintends and guides some of the principal events in this great system, yet he gives no attention to smaller and inferior concerns. But is not this forming a judgment of the power of God from the imperfection of men? Shall we impiously measure eternal omnipotence by our frailty and weakness? and, because our feeble arm is soon oppressed by the multiplicity of business, shall we suppose, that the omnipotent ruler of all the earth can ever be distracted by the variety of his works, or ever overlook one part, which, however small or indifferent in our estimation, may have a connection with the whole scheme of his government, which we are unable to perceive?

Indeed, so long as men have the powers of reason and reflection, and are willing to exercise these powers, so long will they possess abundant means of conviction, that
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there is a superintending providence. A spirit of unbelief, in this particular, argues that degree of a disordered understanding, which amounts to the most frightful calamity upon earth. The man, who renounces a providence, renounces at the same time all that is to be known of God; or, with an horrible impiety, arrays him as a powerful but indolent Being, who takes no care of his creatures, who hath no concern in their preservation or happiness; that is, as a God who is neither just, nor wise, nor good. He is at the same time an infidel to all the dictates of his own reason; for, if he gives place in the least to its admonitions, he must admit, perhaps without perceiving it, the very conclusion which he strives to resist.

He readily believes, that no state can be well governed but by the wisdom and good counsels of its prince; that no house can be properly regulated but by the vigilance and wise œconomy of the heads of the family; that no vessel can be well conducted but by the skill and attention of the pilot; and shall he pretend to reason otherwise with regard to the whole world?

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tions, and lead to conclusions vague and uncertain. We have a far clearer word of revelation; and there the government and providence of God are declared in every page. There we are assured that "the Lord is King for ever and ever;" that he is "the Great Governor among the nations;" that "he ruleth in all the ends of the earth;" that "he is the Judge of all;" that "all things serve him;" that "not a sparrow falleth to the ground without his notice;" and that "he numbereth the very hairs of our heads."

We proceed now to consider the indispensable obligations we are under, to submit ourselves to this sovereign providence, to be conformed to its orders, and to make them the rule of our lives. With this view, let us consider what a hurtful part, for himself, that man acts, who refuses to comply with the appointments of providence; and, on the other hand, how wise and happy the true Christian must be, who acts upon the belief of a sovereign superintendence, and supports himself by this faith. Some there are to be found
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in the world, who live in an entire forgetfulness of God, who seem to have shaken off the yoke of the Almighty, and appear desirous to withdraw themselves from his government. This species of infidelity does not always result from the blindness and disorder of the understanding: It more frequently arises from the errors of the heart. Men, in general, are abundantly ready to declare, that they fully believe in a sovereign power which presides over the world; but observe how far their character and actions, which are the genuine language of the heart, appear to contradict this persuasion of the mind. Are they not found to live in the world as if they had no such belief? and to behave in all the affairs of life with the same obliquity of conduct, with the same anxiety, with the same impatience, with the same negligence of God in their prosperity, with the same dejection of spirit in their adversity, as if providence were no more than an empty name, which had no influence on any thing, which took no share in any of the concerns of men? Besides the criminal nature of such a conduct, men
of

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of this character choose the most wretched and miserable part for themselves; for, without all question, the greatest calamity that can befall any person is to separate himself from God. By leaving God, does he not oblige God, in like manner, to leave him, and to withdraw from him that complacency and paternal protection, which are justly regarded as the most precious ingredients in the happiness of the righteous? Like the ship in the wide ocean, driven at the mercy of every tempest, without a pilot, and without an helm, so must man be, when he hath no longer God for his security and his refuge. Did I find myself in the midst of a frightful desert, alone, and without a guide, ready to wander, without any probability of returning, and exposed to the most palpable and fatal dangers, I should undoubtedly be in great and dreadful consternation. How, then, in the midst of this wilderness of life, encompassed with a multitude of dangers on every hand, can I, with no more than my own natural defences, live in peace? must I not be the prey of perpetual alarms? Thus must it fare with every

every one who is without God, and left to depend on himself alone. He must expect to find, in that dismal state of solitude, nothing but affliction and sorrow, and wretchedness of spirit.

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Let us consider, on the other hand, how wise and happy the true Christian is, who makes the laws of the divine government the rule of his life, and in every situation is influenced by the persuasion of a superintending providence. This will appear, if we consider, that, by a cheerful compliance with the appointments of heaven, he follows that path which ultimately leads to his own perfection and happiness. One grand instance of the government of God consists in that wise system of laws which he hath enacted, as the standard of conduct to every reasonable creature. And surely we are deeply interested in obeying the moral appointments of his kingdom, as they respect the great discoveries of our duty, and the rule of faith and of practice. They who are guided by the light of reason and revelation, must know, that, in all his sovereign appointments, the Almighty hath a disinterested view to the

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the genuine felicity of his creatures, requiring of them only what best becomes their own character, what may most assuredly bless them with safety, with ease and peace, with the most substantial profit, with the purest pleasure in this world, and put them in possession of the highest joy which their nature can receive in a better and more exalted state of being.

Deeply convinced, that all the statutes of his kingdom are infallibly right in themselves, and calculated to improve and perfect the heart, they will be naturally led to adore that hand which points to the residence of their supreme felicity, and to subdue “the natural man, “which knoweth not the things that “are spiritually discerned, which is en- “mity to God, and is not subject to his “laws.” They will join in the devout address of the psalmist: “Thou hast “commanded us to keep thy precepts “diligently. Blessed are they that are “undefiled in the way, who walk in the “law of the Lord. O that my ways were “directed to keep thy statutes. Incline “thou mine heart unto thy testimonies.
“Make

“Make me to go in the path of thy com-
mandments : for therein do I delight.”

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But, further, wise and happy must the true Christian be, not only because he strives to execute the appointments of heaven by a constant attention to trace the limits of good and evil, and to tread the path of duty, but because he is prepared to bear, with an holy composure, every affliction which his righteous Ruler may ordain him to suffer, for the trial of his faith and obedience. While the soul is enlightened with this belief, while it holds fast this principle, that there is a God, the dispenser of good and evil, and that nothing can take place without his order, it possesses within itself a most powerful support under every distress. Amidst all the revolutions which occur in this changeful scene of things, the Christian derives a stability of heart, from the firm persuasion, that there is a sovereign and benevolent intelligence which reigns over all, which can bring order out of seeming confusion, and render the most alarming appearances subservient to the ultimate good and perfection of his works ; that
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there is a skilful pilot, continually at the helm of the universe, to regulate all its motions, and to conduct the vessel, with a steady hand, through storms and tempests, into the happy port of ease.

He knows, that all the circumstances in his lot are arranged by a Being who is uncontrollably powerful; whose high decree no human might can reverse, or art evade; whose counsels stand immoveable, and "who will do all his pleasure;" a Being, whose almighty arm is never exerted but in subservience to purposes of the most disinterested goodness, who hath, by innumerable tokens, approved himself the benefactor of mankind, influenced by an uniform regard to their best interests, and rejoicing in their welfare; who is necessarily the best and most bountiful of beings, and can mean nothing, by any of his dispensations, however apparently severe, but to pour down real blessings on his creatures.

Far will it be from the Christian, who is thus enlightened, and who knows himself to be a feeble and short-sighted creature, ever to vent himself in peevish murmurings,

murings, or to take up the arms of rebellion against eternal wisdom. To resist the belief of an all-bountiful providence, he will account resisting his own highest happiness, which can only be well secured by resigning himself entirely to the divine disposal of God. Thus will he not only be reconciled to his present condition, whatever it may be, but be free from those supernumerary burdens, as they may well be called, which take their rise from the impatience and disorder of the imagination, and the unreasonable dread of future evils; evils which, though they be distant, and may never befall us, yet are often brought near, appropriated, and laid upon the mind by our own hands, and oppress the soul with an heavier weight than all our present and real sorrows.

Upon the whole, let us labour to have our minds thoroughly instructed in the nature, and established in the belief, of a divine government and providence which reigns and rules over all. This is undoubtedly the great hinge on which all religion and virtue must move. Who can remain listless or indifferent, while he is

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penetrated with a full conviction, that he, and all his present and future interests, are at the disposal of an omniscient and almighty Being, who hath published laws for the good order and happiness of men, who notes, with deep attention, every part of their characters, who knows their inmost thoughts and purposes, and who will infallibly recompense their piety with an ample reward, or punish their transgressions with a direful vengeance.

Let us likewise fix upon our minds the abiding persuasion, that the will of God, in all the methods by which it is discovered to men, is most just, and righteous and good, and study to maintain a steady resignation, and unshaken loyalty of heart, to the Great Governor of the universe. This is surely no more than we owe to our Creator. It is, in particular, suited to our condition, during our passage through such a state as the present, where there is nothing to be found on which we can fully depend, and where we are liable to constant deception and disappointment. "Acquaint, therefore, thyself with God, "and be at peace, and thereby good shall
"come

“come unto thee.” Let us continually
bless the providence of God, and meditate,
with thankful hearts, on that watchful
care which he exerciseth over every in-
dividual and every event. Such was the
conduct of the pious Psalmist; for no
sooner does he mention the interesting
subject, than he immediately breaks out
into the warmest address, and calls upon
all the creatures in earth and heaven to
celebrate the praises of their Almighty
Ruler. “Bless the Lord, ye his angels,
“that excel in strength, that do his com-
“mandments, hearkening unto the voice
“of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye
“his hosts; ye ministers of his that do
“his pleasure. Bless the Lord, all his
“works, in all places of his dominions:
“bless the Lord, O my soul.”

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Above all, let it be our strenuous en-
deavour to frame our whole conduct as it
becomes those who are the subjects of this
righteous kingdom, making it our princi-
pal care to please God, and living in con-
stant subjection to his precepts and his
providence. Thus shall we most effectually
secure his favour, and recommend
ourselves

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ourselves to the watchful tuition of that Almighty Being, "who beholdeth the "righteous with a pleasant countenance;" whose infinite wisdom is perpetually employed in securing and advancing their highest interests;—"who makes all things "to work together for their good."

THE END.



